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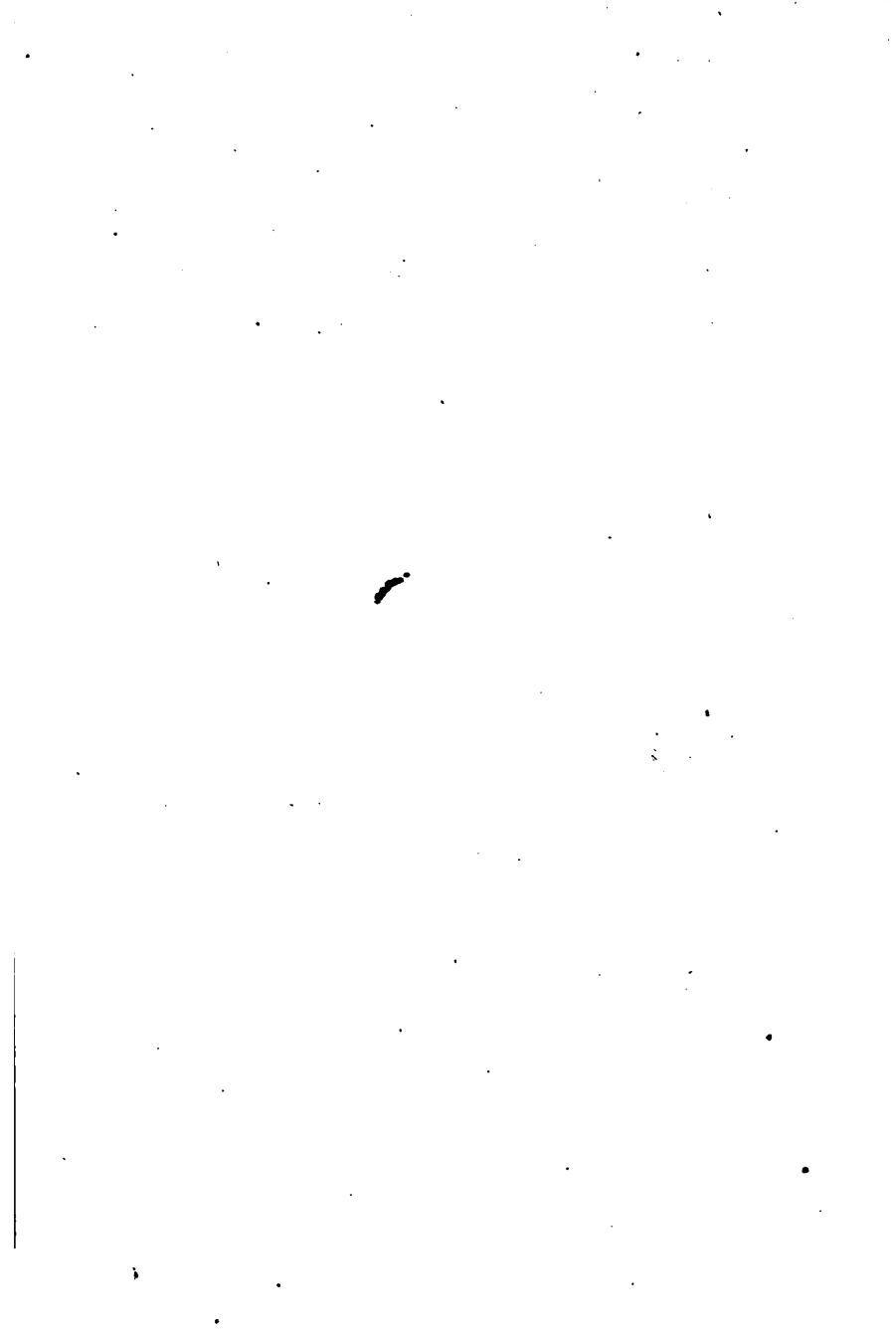
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OUT AND ALL ABOUT





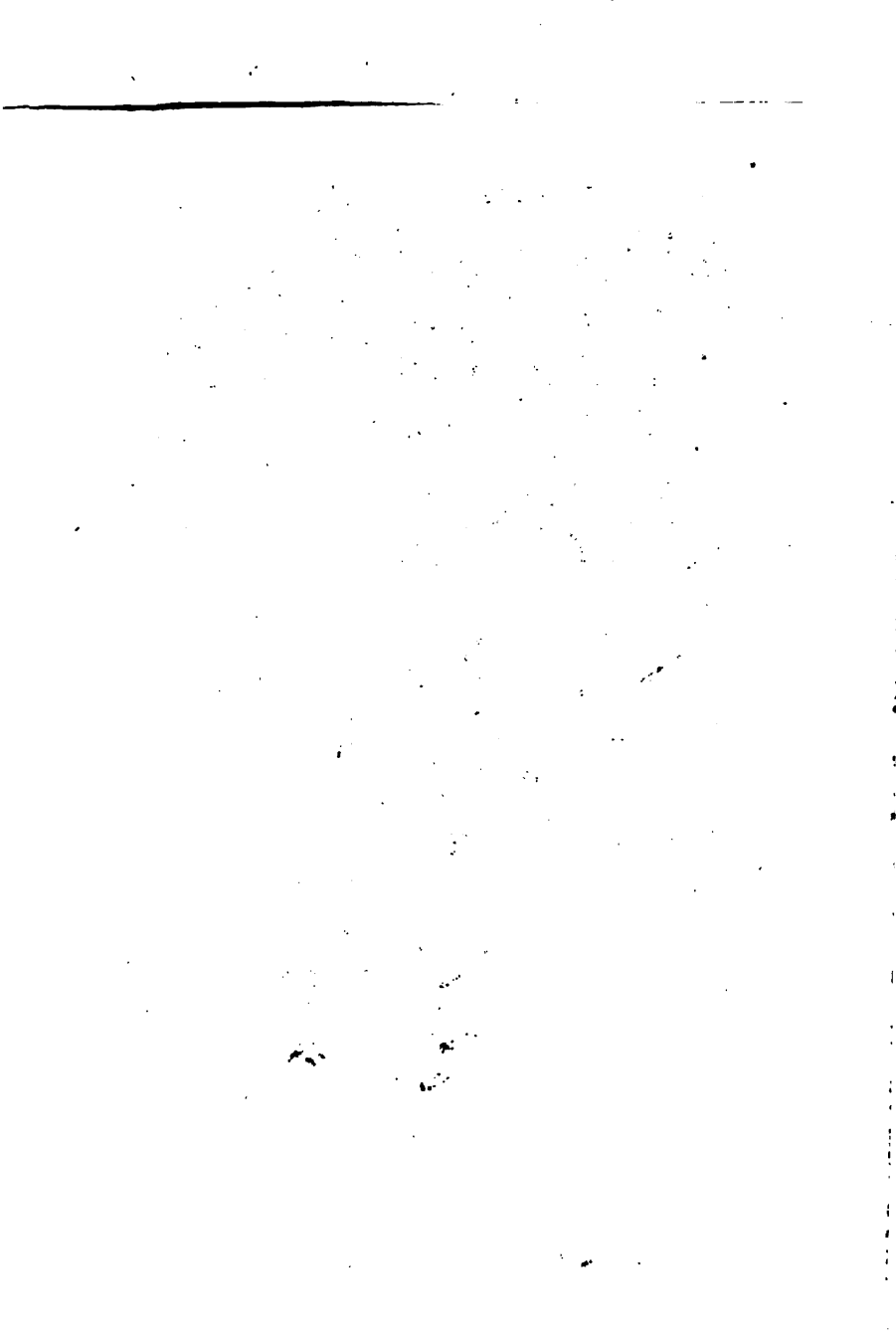


THE HARES AND THE SQUIRRELS.

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OUT AND ALL ABOUT

Fables for Old and Young

BY H. A. PAGE

AUTHOR OF "GOLDEN LIVES," ETC.

WITH EIGHTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY EMINENT ARTISTS

Nature hath her varied moods,
To set out fair similitudes :—
The lower is relate to higher ;
And if to read her we aspire,
There is one law : look low, look high,
And Love the link to bind them by.

HEY.



W. ISBISTER & CO.

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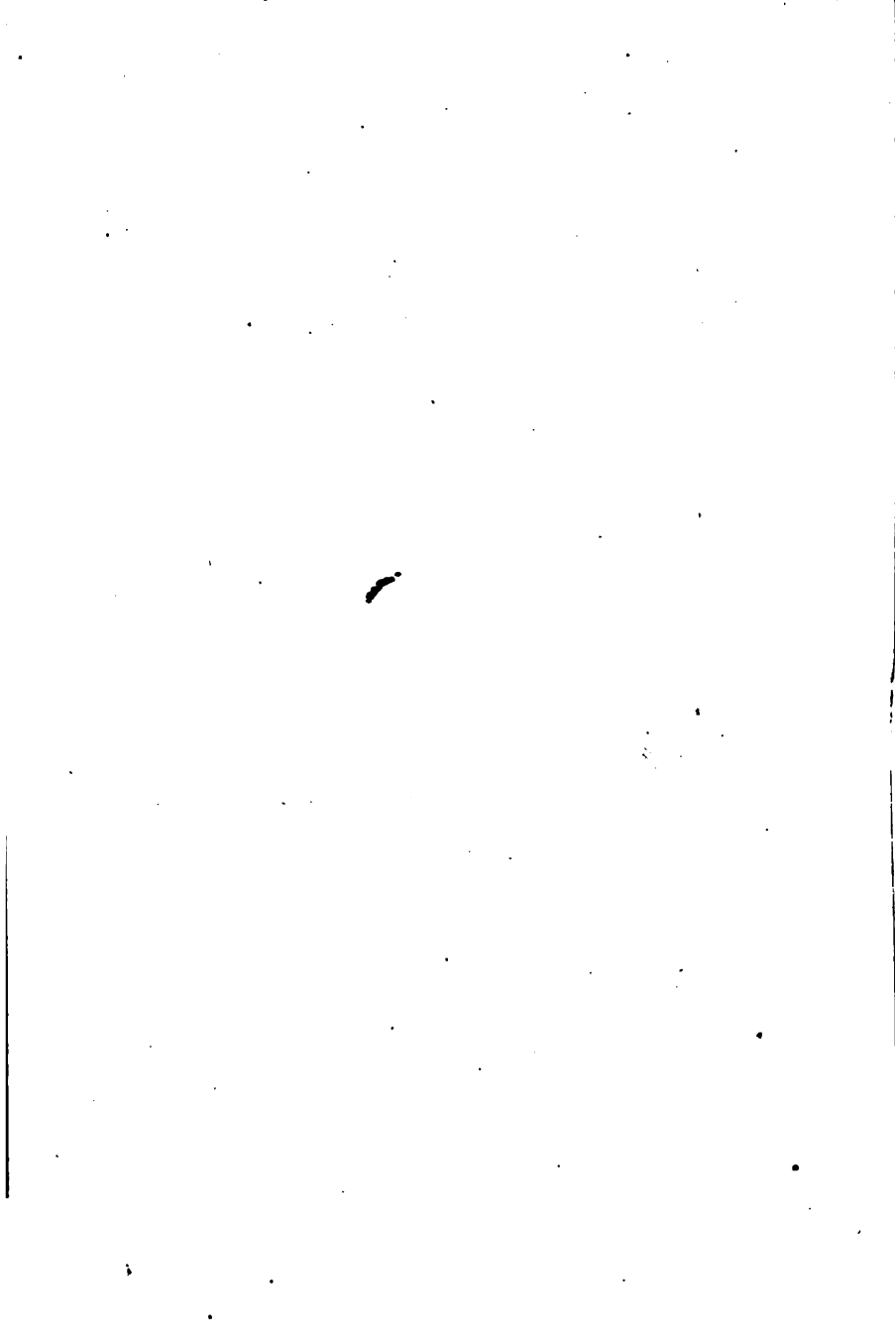


THE SPIDER AND THE ANTS.

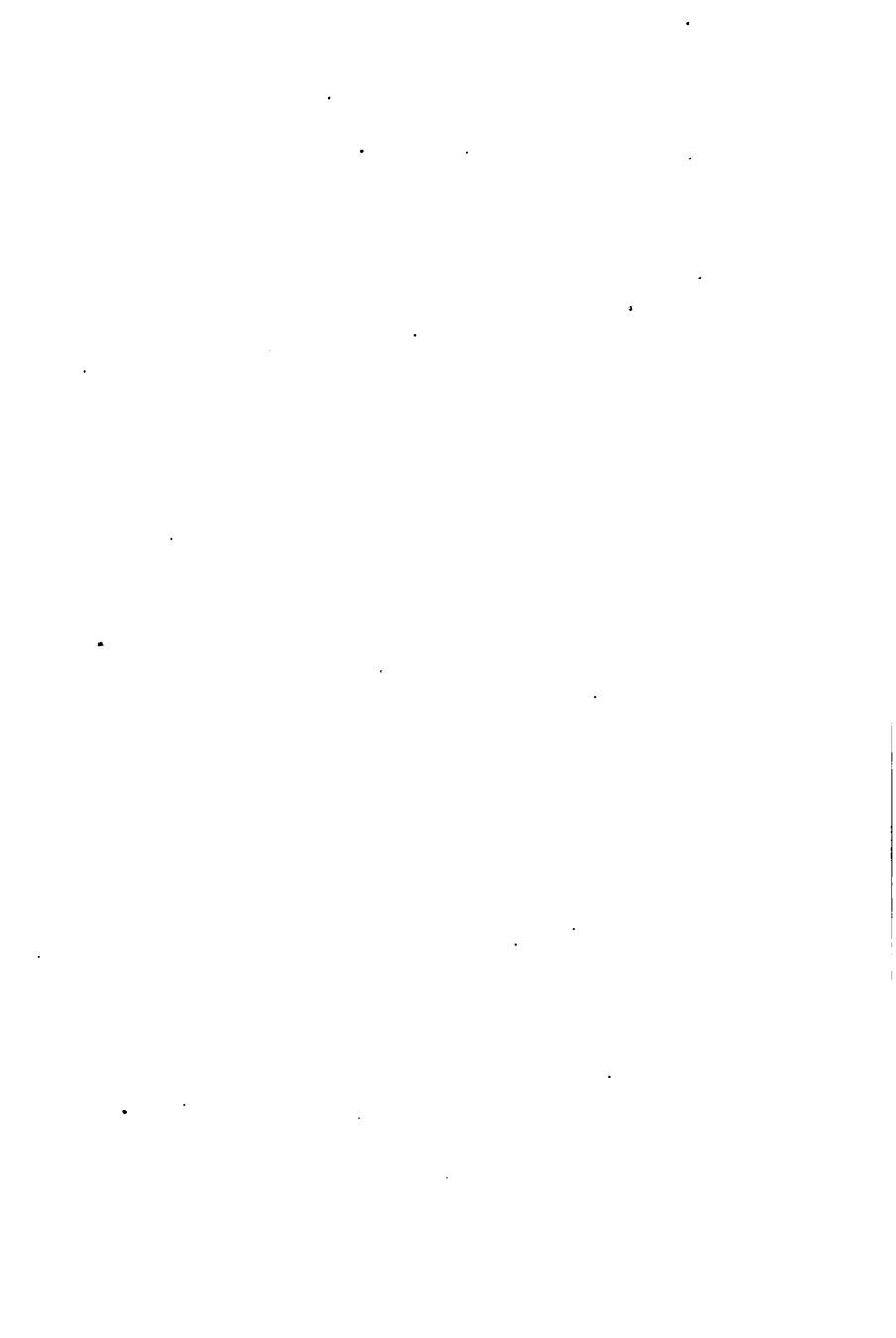
"To scheme is good, but limits make,
And never plot, for any sake."



HERE was once a Spider of liberal tastes that was seized with a strong desire to know how other insects managed their affairs. Perhaps this may have been because he had deserted his own family, and had once woven his net on strawberry - leaves, and sometimes on other fine shrubs, that gave him a more elevated idea of what life is. But at any rate he had a craving for wider



OUT AND ALL ABOUT







THE HARES AND THE SQUIRRELS.

201. C. 112.

himself too far, and rather absently, for his mind was still following up his old thought with a kind of fascination, and wondering if the pincers could fix anything besides ants' flesh. But just at this point his guide wished to pull him round a dark corner, and gave him a gentle tweeze with the pincers which made him scream.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the Ant; "I really didn't mean to hurt you. You're not so tough-skinned as we are, and need to be, I can tell you, for that was merely our hand-shake. Come here," he added, pointing to a stream of Ants carrying white bundles in their mouths almost as big as themselves; "these are our infants which were thrown out of their place by an accident this morning. We are busy making everything right again, as you see, and all will be trig and tight in less than three hours' time, though the place was completely destroyed. I fancy an ox had trod upon it. Little he knew, big, brainless brute!"

The Spider left the Ants with a profound

respect for them, and determined to do something to recommend some points in their social economy to his own people when he was placed in power.

As he was going home he came on three Butterflies hovering over some roses, and he asked them if they could help him in any way. He couldn't manage, however, to get them to comprehend, and he left full of contempt for the Butterflies, with the firm resolve to take advantage of them, when once he got the spiders organized.



"They are stupid, empty, profitless creatures," he said to himself, "in spite of their fine spots and wide wings and bright colours. But I dare say they feed up well, and would make a dainty feast enough."

So he slipped aside and hid himself, and watched till one of them left the others and took its way

home. He followed, and chuckled when he got a sight of Butterfly Town, to which he resolved



very soon to lay siege, as he thought it was so admirably situated for a Spider palace.

He had not retraced his steps very far, when he came upon a crowd of Tree-Wasps. They were busy trying to move a piece of paper of their nest which had been somehow cut away or loosened from it. The Spider at once said he would give them a hand to lift it up, and set to work; but they couldn't manage it, try as they would.

"I'll show you how to do it," said the Spider, "only it wants a little time. If you'll just allow me my own way a moment, the thing will soon be got done."

The Wasps looked doubtfully at the Spider, but they were tired, and glad to get an excuse for a moment's rest. So the Spider mounted the tree and on to the branch where the nest hung, spun an unusually strong thread from there, after fixing it, and showed the Wasps how to tie the thread to the paper below.

"I do that every day," said the Spider. "I can fix these cords to anything—branches, flat walls, or bits of grass. You must have seen

my work, though you didn't know how it was done."



"Oh," said the Wasps, "*we* could tie the knot, for we hang our nests on the branches, as

you'll see; but we are not good at spinning. It all goes to paper with us."

"Oh, but I tie no knots," said the Spider.

Then he mounted the branch again, attached another thread to the end of the former one, which now he had loosed, and spinning this thread over the other side of the branch, showed the Wasps how they could make a pulley of the branch by dragging at this second string with all their might.

After the task was accomplished, the Spider asked if the Wasps had any objection to let him see over their place.

"We don't care for visitors as a general rule," said the Wasps, "but we'll make you an exception. You've done us a good turn, and one good turn deserves another."

So they showed him over their place, and he was vastly pleased with it.

"The bees make wax and honey as well as cells," said the Spider.

"Oh, yes," said the Wasps, "the Bees are

foolish cousins of ours, who learned almost everything from us, and now go and labour and make honey for our sworn enemies. We hate the Bees," they shouted in chorus, "and would like to sweep them off the face of the earth. We don't like



those who make honey for other people, and bring discredit on those that take care of themselves, and don't pretend to anything else. It's simply hypocrisy, and we detest it. Nothing angers us more than to see the rows of hives at the end of the wood at the farmer's door.

Why, the creatures are so stupid, for all the high character they've got for skill and beauty, as not to be able to make a proper nest for themselves. They had to creep into any crevice or hole they could find, and as they couldn't always get a comfortable one enough, they were glad to get into

hives made by man. Did you ever hear of a more detestable want of enterprise and spirit? They deserve nothing else than to be robbed of all the honey they store up, and smoked out of their houses, when they've given men such a pull over them!"

The Spider remembered how the Bee had treated him, and was loud in his declaration of agreement with the Wasps. Before he left he entered into an alliance with the Wasps to do all he could against the Bees, and to protect each other mutually when he was proclaimed King of Spiderland.

After his long journey the Spider returned home, and as soon as possible summoned his people together to describe to them what he had seen in the course of his travels. He told them about the Ants, and their quick, clever ways; and about the Wasps, with their wonderful paper houses and their strong stings. And he then told how he had formed alliances with the Ants and the Wasps on their behalf. Then he spoke

about the Beetles, and the Butterflies, and the Bees, on whom they were to make war, and become rich with the spoil; and he drew a fine picture of Butterfly Town, as the very site for a Spider colony—a great idea of his. “What is the reason we are not a stronger people?” he cried. “We have better brains than most of our neighbours; we can spin and weave, while they can’t do either; and when we have the Wasps and the Ants to protect us, we may soon become a great people, instead of as now each one tied to his own little spot on bush, or tree, or wall, with no eye or ambition for anything beyond. We must get imperial notions. Union is strength,” he wound up; “if we could but unite like the Wasps and the Ants, we could conquer the world; and they can show us how to do it.”

A grave old Spider replied to this speech at some length. He said it was good to know how other creatures lived and worked, and he had no objection to that whatever. But he had some suspicion that their sanguine travelling friend

had been taken in. His own knowledge, he confessed, did not claim to be very extensive, but still he knew that Bees and Butterflies were more to be trusted than Ants and Wasps, who might be very clever, but at the same time were very dangerous. Why, hadn't the Wasps themselves plainly told him what their policy was?—to turn everything to their own use, however cruel and hard it might be to others? And, though it seemed that their inquiring friend had had the rare good luck to meet with a very quiet and sensible member of the Beetle family—one who preferred the taste of flowers and sweet herbs to eating up his fellow-creatures, lying in wait for them, and even burying them, and who certainly was every way hospitable without ostentation or many words, until he and his had, even on their friend's own showing, been little better than insulted in their own house—he could tell them, nevertheless, that there were others of the Beetle tribe as fierce as wasps and ants, and just as fond of fighting; and he did believe that the Spiders

might find them very formidable enemies to tackle. Some of them, he understood, even fought frequently amongst themselves, not to speak of fighting with strangers. He, for his own part, was against all union and policy of the kind proposed. He was sure no good could come of uniting to injure others. In fact, he was proud that Spiders kept to their own business, and had never been known to conspire. Of course, they made webs and caught the flies, but that was obedience to the simple dictates of nature. His aversion to union with Ants and Wasps, he might say, was such, that were his advice taken, he would have a guard put upon any one who had agreed to such a thing on the strength of *representing* them, and been bold enough to come among them afterwards to recommend it; for he was more than satisfied that, if they ever went into any such scheme, the end of it would be that they would be turned into wasp-paper, or perhaps ant-slaves, or even ant-cows, when the Wasps and the Ants were so

amazingly ingenious ! What could be more conducive to freedom and right simple tastes than



the way Spiders had lived for ages—each on his own plot, doing his best for himself quietly, and

neither minding other people nor quarrelling with them ?

The veteran Spider's advice was taken, and the adventurer who had thought to establish himself by drawing his people into dangerous alliances on pretence of improving them was seized and put under guard, and forced to catch flies mainly to feed the old and infirm folk in his original district.

THE WEATHERCOCK AND THE FIR.

THE Weathercock on a high tower, through overwork, and stormy winds, had got out of order, and creaked as it turned round and round. "What is the reason you rattle on so?" said a high Fir, that grew beside. "I see some use in your talking through the day, and even in the winter your noise might keep the crows and bats from coming dash against you; but in the summer nights, when every thing is at play, it does baffle me to know why you do it." "Ah," said the Weathercock, with a wink, for he could wink in spite of his position on the church tower; "it's little you know. I've found out that if I didn't do it, the Jackdaws would chatter night and day and do mischief. I only creak to keep the creatures still: they once came and sat on me in a body, and they would do it again if I didn't make this noise, and then nobody would know how the wind is." The Fir had not another word to say.



THE WINDMILL AND THE POPLAR-TREE.

“Quarrellers seldom grow fat.”

DO you fancy the drowsy Windmill has no secrets? that it just goes to sleep when it stops, and does not wake again till the great sails are set loose? that it never argues, or scolds, or puts itself right with its neighbours? If you really think so, it's but little you know of the world. The Windmill, like some others, thinks most when it is not busy, and gets into

almost all its scrapes and quarrels just then. Listen for a moment, and I'll tell you how a Windmill I once knew fell out with a Poplar-tree that it had for a near neighbour—how



they argued and miscalled each other, and how they were brought to agree again like very brethren.

A great storm was coming. The sun had gone

down with more than his ordinary brightness, and left strips of golden light that looked like streamers stretching far across the sky, because the clouds would lift up and bring great purple bars over them, and then vanish away again. Every one knew that a storm was coming. The Fir-trees looked at the Oaks, and nodded their heads slowly, and whispered; and the Birds chattered and drew their heads under their wings, but could not sleep; the Streams looked up at the Clouds, and murmured to themselves, like the old women you have sometimes seen, who will speak in an undertone to themselves of past times, even when there is great commotion around them; and the cattle in the fields cowered together under the trees as though they, poor unreasoning creatures, guessed the meaning of all the whispering and ominous head-shaking that was going on. The wind rose and came in sudden gusts, each one stronger than the last; the branches of the Poplar (which was not so young as it had been, and perhaps had got a

touch of rheumatism in its joints) creaked as they swung, and the timbers of the Windmill, not so firm as they once were, did the same. And this creaking—the first that either had ever



been guilty of—was the whole cause of the quarrel.

“You gouty old thing,” said the Poplar-tree; “what for do you make such unearthly noises? I believe it is all to spite me,

who have kept the cold wind off you for all these years, knowing, as you do, how delicate my ear is. I never did expect much gratitude from you, but such gross abuse I did *not* expect. Pray stop it, and let us live at peace, for I'll quarrel, as sure as I'm here, if this goes on."

"You can quarrel as soon as you like," said the Windmill. "Your impertinence is more detestable than your conceit. Why, you began it! Didn't I hear you shrieking out for help half an hour ago? And now you want to put on fine airs, and lay the blame on me."

"That's like you," retorted the Poplar; "you fancy you are independent because you go on grinding in your stupid, prosaic way, whether the wind is low or high; but I tell you, you can't afford to quarrel with me. If you do, it will be the worse for you."

"Well, I never heard such assurance," replied the Windmill. "If the wind and I agree, it's little I need care for you."

"We'll see," said the Poplar. "The wind

has never been favourably known for steadiness in friendship more than in some other things; and perhaps you Windmills would have found that out long before this but for the shelter you get from others, without the least consideration." And here he tossed his head, turned away, began to sulk, and would not utter another word.

"Come, now," said the Windmill, in a conciliating style, "I didn't mean to vex you. Say what you would like, and I'll do it if I can; only the wind is rather too much for me, and I can't stop the creaking all at once; I only wish I could."

But the Poplar wouldn't heed the polite words, and at this the Windmill, thoroughly nettled, commenced to speak to itself in this strain:—

"Very good, Mr. Poplar, but people can't have it all their own way in this world. And so you'll quarrel; be it so. I shan't knuckle down to you; you're older than I am, and should have better manners." And here the Windmill abruptly broke off, for a fresh gust of wind just

then struck his sails and made them shake and shiver. "Bless me! but this *is* a gale," said he, and his timbers strained and creaked again as he said it.

The wind veered round a little, and the Poplar was able to bend over towards an Elm that grew close beside.

"Did you ever hear such abuse?" it whispered to the Elm, who was always glad to speak fair to any one he had to do with.

"You can't expect any other from him. He's a machine, put together by hammer and screw, and fancies on that account that he's 'self-made!'" and here both Poplar and Elm broke out in a loud laugh that surprised the birds, and the sheep that lay shivering in the field, notwithstanding that it was soon lost again in the loud blast. "But we can punish him and save ourselves at the same time," and the Elm looked knowingly and quizzingly at the Poplar.

"Can we, though? Tell me how, and I'll do all I can."

“Well, if you bend close over towards me and keep there awhile, the whole force of the wind will take his sails and tear them. That’s the advantage of not being ‘self-made.’ We trees can yield a point and take a point too, when it suits us. There! Give me your hand on it, and hold firm.”

The Poplar threw all the strength of his will into the effort, determined not to shield the Windmill any longer, if he could help it; and as his tip touched the Elm a thrill of joy shot through every fibre.

“He’ll rue his ingratitude!” said the Poplar.

“That he will, and more,” said the Elm, with a sweet, silvery voice.

“We’ll see who’ll rue,” retorted the Windmill, whom neither expected to hear them. A quick listener would have said that the words came through his teeth, if he had had any. “Plotters never yet made much of it in the long-run!” added he, mischievously.

“Plotters! do you hear him?” hissed the

Elm-tree into the Poplar's ear. "That's a compliment to you and me, to be sure. Hold firm; here's a blast will tame him;" and as he spoke the wind dashed past and shook the sails so that they broke off with a great noise and fell, and were carried away, and rested not till they were near the foot of the valley, while still the Elm and Poplar remained fixed in fond embrace.

* * * * *

And just as the Poplar, feeling himself exhausted, had perforce to drop hold of his friend's shoulder, the wind suddenly veered round, and now blew on the Poplar from the north with still more terrible force, and struck him just where before the sails had saved him. This was so unexpected that he was taken quite at a disadvantage, and turned once more to the Elm for help. But the Elm was now so much engaged with a Fir-tree that stood between him and the wind, that the Poplar could not make him hear. Blast after

blast came with greater and greater force, until at length, being spent with his efforts, the poor Poplar succumbed, the top was torn off and tossed away up the valley. When daylight came, the Poplar and the Windmill looked at each other with much amazement, that neither of them tried to conceal.

“Ah, so you’ve lost your sails!” said the Poplar; “you’ll set more store on our help after this, I’ll warrant.”

“Perhaps I may,” retorted the Windmill; “but if the wind and I agree it’s little I need care for you.”

“You said that before,” said the Poplar-tree, “and yet your sails are gone, and let me tell you, you do look mighty odd!”

“My sails are not gone so far as your head, luck go with it!” rejoined the Windmill, now determined to cut home; “and even though they were, I can get other sails as good in no time—that’s the advantage of the hammer and screw; but I guess you can’t get another head

so easy as all that. You look odd enough yourself, to be sure; but you should take care not to associate yourself with people of so much harder fibre that they can break you down easy just to lift themselves up a bit."

To this the Poplar could say nothing, for he had begun to have a suspicion that the Elm had got a deal of protection from him in the storm, and already seemed to be a good bit taller; but whether that was because the Poplar was now so much lowered in stature himself or otherwise, he could not quite make out.

"Ah, but," said the Poplar, "I will grow a finer shape than ever. My strength will go now to making something like fulness, and not mere height, and I shall be a far prettier tree than I was. Wait a while, and you'll see."

"Well, I wish it may be so, with all my heart; but I hope we shan't hereafter be so weak as to quarrel as we have done. The shrieking and screaming—why, it was the wind that did it, and the Elm made far more noise than

either of us, as the Swallows will tell you. It wanted a screen, and set us against each other just to get it. But we'll watch him after this; let us shake hands over that, at all events!"

So they shook hands over it; and the Poplar from that day decided to go on all his life without growing a new top, so that the Elm at any rate could not again be sheltered by his branches; and to this day, though Poplars and Windmills are very friendly, the Elms and the Pollards—who had this strange sort of origin—do not care much for each other's company. But they two took good care to keep their resolution a secret from the Elm; and often the Windmill, though he nods to the Elm courteously, drones over the old story in the pauses of this song which you may sometimes hear him singing:—

*Here on the hill,
I work with a will,
To grind the children bread;
I fling my sails
Like mighty flails,
That the workers may be fed.*

*With a burr and a whirr,
In a ceaseless stir,
I grind for beast and man ;
Be he rich or poor
None could do more,
For I aye do all I can !*

*I love the spring
When, on quivering wing,
The swallow skims the stream ;
When the seed is sown,
And all alone
The daisies sit and dream.*

*And I love the lights,
That dance like sprites,
Below me in the vale,
When the time hath come
For the harvest home,
And dance and song prevail.*

*I drowse and dream,
When the evening gleam*



*Is on the distant west ;—
 When all is still
 On plain and hill,
 And the winds are laid to rest.*

*And when darkness spreads
 O'er the mountain-heads
 Her mantle of ebon gloom ;
 I rehearse me a rhyme
 Of the better time,
 That sadness may have no room.*

*But when morning pale,
 Like a silver sail,*

*Shakes out her robe of pearl,
I hail her with song,
That is sweet and strong,
As my giant sails I unfurl.*

*With a burr and a whirr,
In a ceaseless stir,
I grind for beast and man :
Be he rich or poor,
None could do more,
For I aye do all I can.*



A VIOLET'S ADVENTURES.

"True fame is hardly to be bought,
She sometimes follows where she is not sought."

Paraphrase of Persian Proverb.



WILD Violet that grew very snugly sheltered at the foot of a high hill, once shook hands with a wandering Fairy, and was immediately seized with a great desire to know where the sun went to when it set and sank. This was, perhaps, a mere excuse for a wish to see the world, and to gratify vanity on the Violet's part; for it no sooner found that

it could hold intercourse with beings of a superior order, than it began to look down upon its neighbours and old friends. It very ungraciously snubbed a young Fern that had been attentive to it, and had helped to carry water to it many



a time. As for the young Primrose which it used to admire so much, the Violet would not vouchsafe the poor creature so much as a single word.

And the wild Violet was very firm; for the Fairy had told it that it could only succeed, if

it kept itself aloof from all companions, and told no one of its secret. So it lay and waited, and, whenever it felt a warmer glow of life thrilling through its fibres, it hoped and dreamed its deliverance was now near at hand, and shut its ears to all that was going on near by, which before used to interest it much. And it fell into the habit of speaking to itself and laughing at the low aims of its old friends.

“As for affection,” it would reflect, “that’s all humbug! The Fern helped me because it was its nature to and couldn’t help it; and as for that Primrose, she thought to mate with me and be honoured—poor, pale, yellow thing!” and even as he looked the Primrose seemed to fade and shrink away.

But the Violet had no time to make any work about that: he had his own business to mind; and just as the Primrose shrivelled and died, the Violet was loosed from earth, and, with a cheer that escaped him in spite of his resolution, he broke away from his old home without so much

as an adieu, and made directly towards the sun-setting, as he had intended.

“ Ah,” he said to himself, “ I’ll soon be famous—men will learn to speak of me with respect and admiration; for I’ll find out the secret of the sun, and come back and tell all about it, notwithstanding that I once lived in that mean hole east there;” and he quickened his pace again as he thought of it. So he wandered all day, till the sun-setting, when he sat down to see if he was making any progress. He could not convince himself that he had made much; but then he thought, “ It is a great work, and doubtless demands much time;” and in sheer weariness he lay down on the bank to rest. He had not lain very long, when he was rudely shaken, and, looking up, he saw his friend the Fairy and a great number of others, some of them with heads like men, and others with the strangest appearance; but almost all of them giggling, and laughing, and dancing about in the oddest manner.

“ Rise, and join us!” said the Fairy.

“I need rest,” said the Violet, rubbing his eyes and looking round in amazement.



“We are your friends,” said the Fairy, “and friendship is better than sleep.”

"I don't know that," the Violet ventured to say, a little shortly, for he was almost unable to keep his eyes open.

"We'll prove it to you," said a pair of Compasses and a Triangle, that trotted up together, and peered into the Violet's face, in a way that would have been disrespectful if it hadn't been so evidently serious. "We are masters of the ceremonies," said they, "and look to the rules; so get up; it is our pleasure so! When the rest dance, we work; but, for all that, we're the *masters* here!"

"It's all right," said the Fairy, who had all this while been listening; "take this, and that will do for sleep, and better, too;" and he gave the Violet a little white powder and sprinkled some liquid over his face.

"Put the powder on your tongue," said a Fairy Leaf that came up at the moment, "and that'll make you right;" and he turned and pirouetted away again.

The Violet did as he was bid, and in a

moment—O delightful sensation !—all weariness had vanished ; and, like the others, he felt impelled to dance and sing. It was as though all the dull bliss of growing was pressed or concentrated into a single instant of time. So he mixed with the rest, and gave himself up to the spirit of the party, and poured forth his thoughts to any one that would listen, in language so sweet and convincing that he wondered at himself.

A Drumhead was very attentive and proved a remarkably good listener, gaining the Violet's respect immensely by his quietness, and his easy way of saying "Ha, ha !" "Yes, yes !" "So !" "Quite so !" "Re-ally !" "Do you say so !" "Hum !" "Well, I never !" and so forth. The awkward



thing was, that they were followed by a Trombone, whose weakness was not to listen, but to make himself heard, as he went alongside blowing every now and then, on which the Drumhead once or twice whispered to the Violet, "He's a good fellow, and very useful to me, but he's cracked, quite cracked with vanity" — here touching his forehead significantly — "and one must just humour him."

When the first faint light of morning came, all the Fairies vanished, and the Violet felt solitary and worn-out. But whenever he thought of his great object, he resolved to go on. So he wandered for a while, till the sun became strong, and, reaching the border of a field, he thought to himself that he had better lie down and rest. But the buzzing of bees, and the chirping of crickets, and the singing of birds, and the very sound of the branches as they waved in the breeze that languidly stirred now and then, distressed him, and wouldn't let him sleep; and while he listened, as he really could

not help doing, he began to fancy he heard words distinctly. At first it was just a vague hum, such as you, my reader, may sometimes have heard on suddenly coming close to a village school; but by-and-by he could more and more clearly make out words: "The Violet is full; the Violet is full!" He felt flattered at this notice; but turned round desiring sleep. He could not banish the words, however. They kept ringing in his ears, till his brain was quite in a fever, and he rose and walked on through the wood. The sun had sunk, and he had some difficulty in finding his way, as he had nothing to guide him aright now. He was sorry that he had not asked some advice on the point from the Compasses and the Triangle, who seemed to be so grave and so knowing; but he had not mentioned his secret to them, as he had not had any opportunity of asking the Fairy if it would be right for him to do so. The windings of the wood and the confused state of his mind at length made him lose all reckoning. He tried

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and tried to discover his exact whereabouts, but could not manage it, and went round and round in a maze as it seemed to him. To his horror, as he sat on a bank looking about, he beheld a red cow feeding quite close to him, and at sight



of it he rose and ran, for he was afraid of being eaten up and dying the most terrible of deaths. He was sure it was following him, and held on wildly, till his breath was almost spent in his breast.

He fell prone into a field, over a tree-root, from beneath which, as it chanced, a Mole was just then looking out.

"Ah!" said the Mole, "you're in haste, and hasty folks are seldom well served. You look faint—can I do anything for you?"

"I wan't water sorely," said the Violet.

"You'll have plenty of it soon enough," said the Mole. "If it hadn't been for that, you wouldn't have found me here just at this moment." And as he spoke, thunder pealed through the wood, lightning darted through the trees, and struck some of them, rending their strong trunks in pieces.

"Come into my house," said the Mole, roughly pulling the Violet, "till I close the door against the rain. It was for that I came up; I may be too late, and we may both be ruined. And he at once set to throwing up earth in all directions. The atmosphere was so close, and the place so dark, that the Violet thought he would have died; but the Mole pulled him along passage after passage—up and down, and down and up—till they came to a round hall, and there they sat down.

"I wonder to see you out at such a time," said the Mole.

"I was seeking for my home—I'd lost my

way," answered the Violet; for he remembered what the Fairy had said about keeping his great search a secret; but his chief reason was that he thought the Mole would laugh if he was told that a Violet had been trying to find where the sun went to when it set and sank out of sight. And then he began to describe the hill at the foot of which he had lived for so long.

"Oh, that must be Snow-cap," said the Mole; "you're very nearly lost in your own castle, for it's just at the border of the wood. If you keep round to the left, five minutes, or even less, will bring you to it. But you can stay here quietly for the night, and then leave in the morning." To this the Violet, faint to exhaustion, at length agreed, and lay down.

But there was little rest for him. The Mole was busy most part of the night. Now and again the Violet heard the rain patter-pattering on the earth above, and a thunder-peal would rise over all else, and then he would tremble, so that the Mole would stop working, and look at him, and

laugh to himself quietly, as he poked his sharp nose and his hand-like paws in the wet earth. "He's a tender fellow," thought the Mole; "but Violets are a good sort, and not given to travel. He looks as if he'd had trouble, and so I'm glad I befriended him. His folk may serve me some day, who knows?"

At length the morning came, clear and calm; the air and the sky, with their freshness and odour, seeming as though Nature strove through them to atone for her angry passion of the night. The Mole pointed out the way to the Violet, and, after warm expressions of gratitude, he bade the Mole good-bye, and soon found himself at his old home, where he at once went to bed, and slept soundly for a good many hours.

* * * * *

When he awoke, he found changes among his neighbours, though his absence had been so short. Some had gone away, others had come. The Wood-Sorrels and the Starworts were in the lodgings the Cousins Primrose and Cowslip had

had, and the Ferns had somewhat added to their family, and were all the prouder and more overbearing-looking that they had got a little red-headed.

The Violet took in these facts as he opened his eyes in a half-dreamy way, and he felt that he was being scanned and criticized by all and sundry around, and that the Ferns were speaking about him to the others in a very disparaging manner. At first the Violet could not make out the words, but he shut his eyes and listened intently, and was sure he caught, amongst the gabble of flower-dialects, "The Violet is fool! the Violet is fool!" and he was seized with terrible chagrin and self-contempt in thinking of the airs he had given himself towards his neighbours before he had set out to find the secret of the sun. "And here I am again," he thought, "and perhaps they will contrive to make the place too hot for me. If they do, I'll take staff in hand once more and ascend the hill; they can't follow me there!"

The days passed slowly and heavily, and the

Violet did not feel any more at peace; his neighbours treated him coldly, and seemed to combine against him, and kept up a constant chatter, in which he was sure he heard himself named. So one fine morning he started, saying to himself—

“It may be all for the best. Why should I remain to disturb their peace or destroy my own self-respect by staying among people who despise me? I’ve heard say it’s cold up there; but I deserve no better, and perhaps even there I may grow a little.”

So with a sore and humbled heart he set forth on his road. He journeyed for three days, only resting as long as to enable him to take refreshment. On the evening of the third day he found himself resting on a jutting spur of the mountain. The sun was sinking, and as he looked he suddenly exclaimed—

“I have found the secret, when I no more hoped to gain it, but only peace and quietness. Instead of travelling the plains, one must clamber higher and higher up towards the cold snow-

peaks to see the sun the longer. Perhaps if I struggle to the top of this mountain it may be made all clear to me."



So, nerved with a new hope, he pushed on day by day, higher and higher, till he reached near to the summit, where patches of snow lingered

in the shaded hollows even until summer-time. There was a murmur of water and a cold air stirring, but he said to himself, "I like it; this is the place for me." And planting himself in a crevice where some grass grew sweet and green on a little ridge, he settled himself and waited for the sunset. It was so glorious that it completely overwhelmed him; for long after the sun was lost to all below he could see it, and see it growing more brilliant and beautiful every moment.

"It is worth the trouble and the sacrifice," said the Violet; "here will I abide and do my duty, and strive to grow in the added light of the sun; and though men may call me the Mountain Violet, and tell of my past foolish ambitions, that will not matter, since they will once more speak of me with respect, if not with honour, and since, in spite of the coldness of my dwelling, I shall be longer than any of my old friends in the blessed light of the sun."



THE DISCONTENTED WREN.

“There’s no an ill, but there might be a waur.”—*Scotch Proverb.*

SPRING had come at last: the snowdrops had almost disappeared, and in their stead came the pale primroses and cowslips, standing up like troops of fairies lifting their fair faces to the sky; and a blue harebell or two, born before their time, peeped like gentle eyes through the fern and soft green grass that already waved in the wood. The wind stole round the trees lingeringly, as though wooing the sap to

ascend and clothe them in their bright green dress; and the birds began to sing together, and hop about with a brisk half-aimless motion, as though bringing themselves into active habits, knowing that the days of pairing and building were close at hand. A solitary humble-bee would pass along, droning to himself and holding straight on his own course, as if he saw far ahead some fine flower on which he could alight and be satisfied, and had not so much as a thought for anything beside. But it was hardly so with a little Wren that



sat on the top of a hedge which swayed gently in the breeze. Thinking itself very wise, it began to bemoan its sad fate and that of its tiny brothers, in this wise:—

“How sad,” it said, “that we are such dull little birds, and so insignificant; nobody

cares a pin for us! If we had but more size, were it but like the Plover and the Stock-dove I saw yesterday, what a delightful thing it would be! If we even had bright feathers, like the Pheasants that run about in the underwood near by, it would be something! There's really nothing bright about us, save our little red crown, and that gets us laughed at rather than anything else, for nobody would ever take us for Kings! And then we live in such poor bits of houses; if we could but get something finer it would perhaps help us. Whew! what's that? Ah, a Swallow. I thought at first it might be a Hawk, they fly so fast. Swifts they're called, and they *are* swifts too. How easily they catch the flies, just by being so swift! whereas we have to run about and work out and in, in and out, through and through the bushes and hedges, before we can catch anything.

And just as he said this, the Swallow came back and settled quite near him.

“Forgive me,” said the Wren, advancing and addressing the Swallow, as he dropped a curtsey, “but you fly so fast I cannot but compliment you on your speed; and then you



are so fine-shaped, I really admire you more than I can say, if you'll pardon a stranger for speaking so frankly.”

The Swallow looked doubtfully for a moment at the Wren, setting its head to one side in

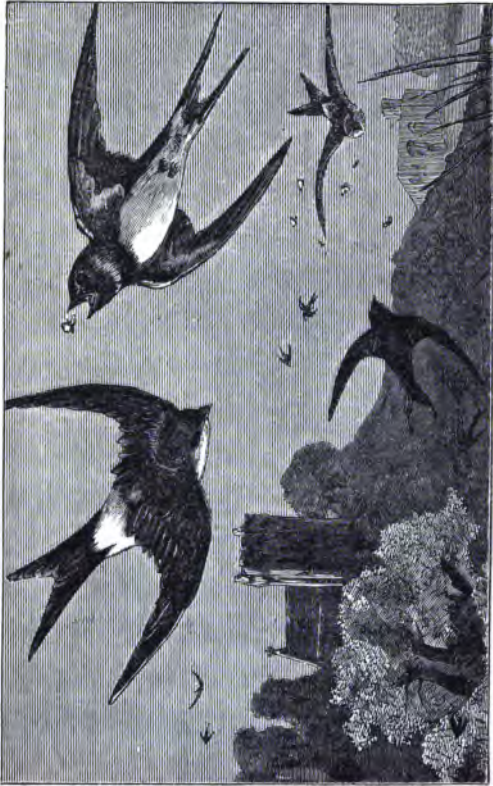
a rather quizzing manner; but seeing that the little fellow looked honest, the Swallow answered politely—

“Yes, to be sure we fly fast enough, but what’s the good of it? If we had only better legs it would often suit us to sit still a while, as you do, but we can’t; we’re only good to fly, and the trees are no treat to us, as they are to you. In fact, we are so kept on the move for the flies that we scarcely see anything else, and have but poor eyesight after all, and little enjoyment in life, considering.”

The Wren looked incredulous, but did not say anything, and the Swallow went on—

“And then we have really no fixed home, as you may say, but must cross the sea twice a year at least, else we should lose all our feathers and get no sleep. We’re not an envious sort, and try to keep to our own business, but we’ve quite enough to do, and do not crave what I’ve overheard human creatures call ‘the luxury of being envied.’ We fly so quick, just in and out of doorways and windows,

after the flies and the gnats, that we often catch a hint of what is going on inside; and



I can tell you it's not always such as you would expect considering men are so much

better than birds, and can do so much for themselves. But that's neither here nor there: what I wanted to say was that, though it may be very fine to see us skimming over and over the smooth water, it's just our work; and when the autumn winds get chill and the days shorten, we have to hurry off and seek sunshine far away."

"Far away!" repeated the Wren reflectively, unable to realise the meaning of the words.

"Ah, so far that you could never count," said the Swallow; "but I cannot sit longer, for it gets very trying. Good-bye; perhaps another day I may tell you something about the country far away."

And he flew off to a little lake that was close at hand, and began to shoot over and over the pool like a bright animated arrow.

Just as the Wren was musing on what the Swallow could have meant by saying that he could never count how far the swallows had to go for the sunshine, the Stockdove passed the

bush where the Wren sat, and settled on a tree near by, where he had his nest. He began to



tell his mate, in words so loud that the Wren could not help hearing, that they must quit the

place, for he was persuaded they had enemies in that district; but his mate entreated him to stay for at least one day more where they were, as it was possible he was mistaken. The world was better than it was called, and sometimes suspicions were ill-founded, and listeners never heard good of themselves.

The wren felt rather reproved at these last words, but a thought passed through his mind that perhaps an enemy to the Stockdove was no friend to him. He retired to his nest in an old overgrown wall at the border of the wood, in a very troubled state of mind, and could not sleep for brooding on the dangers to which he fancied he was exposed.

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The days passed on; and though the Wren at first kept near home, he now began to take courage again, and to venture abroad freely. "It must have been all nonsense," he said to himself, and set about his regular work, which had been

rather neglected. He was so delighted at seeing the bright buds appearing on all hands, and the



early flowers coming up thickly, that he quite forgot his fears. The spring-broom was just

breaking through its prickly sheath, and shedding brightness abroad with its yellow flowers; the wild bryony decorated the hedges; the violet and the speedwell, the windflower and the foxglove, the wood-sorrel and the hyacinth, made a varied carpet in the wood to tempt forth all living



creatures to rejoice. So the Wren hopped on briskly from tree to tree, from bush to bush, so possessed with the spirit of the spring that he could not help stopping now and then, for very gladness, to pour forth a little bit of song. But just as he was doing his utmost for a superfine note, a Rain-bird on a high tree opposite him

raised a mocking melody that rang far and near through the wood, and quite put him out.



“Ay, that’s how it always is with us,” said the Wren when he recovered himself. “All the

birds make a mock of us. How happy I could be if I never saw one of them! At any rate, whenever they appear I feel quite cast down and unhappy."

And he flew still farther away from his home, and was musing on the delights of solitude, when he came to the corner of the heath where the Plover had its nest. But what was his surprise to see that all the bushes—the fine ferns and furze and heath in which he had often, in years past, found a delightful dinner—were quite gone. Scores of men with picks and spades were busily digging and pulling up roots. The Plover was wheeling round and round in an agony of terror, and its cry was pitiful to hear. The Wren knew at once that the Plover's nest and eggs had been destroyed; and now he did not envy the Plover his greater size and his bigger nest, but thought that it was perhaps lucky he was himself so small as to be able to make his nest in the crevice of an old wall at the wood-side, where no one was likely to seek for a nest. He fled

back to the wood; but as he neared his nest he heard strange sounds—crack! crack! puff, piff! piff, puff!—and, coming nearer, he soon saw that his friend the Stockdove had not been altogether wrong in his fear of danger. Men and boys were beating about the wood for a considerable distance; and the last sight he saw was that of the Stockdove coming fluttering down through the air almost in his track, the feathers red with blood, and the eyes closed. All the Wren could see, on looking round fearfully as he hastily pursued his way, was that the Stockdove never stirred, but lay on the ground quite still.

For many a day thereafter the Wren went about warily, and was almost afraid to sing, though he began to think that perhaps he had something to be thankful for, and was more considerate and helpful than he had been to his wife at home, who was now full of domestic cares, and who, though she had a good share of the hard work, could not agree with her mate in his reasons for being so discontented.



The days passed quickly, the long, bright summer days, and autumn came on apace. The finest flowers had now faded and shrivelled and died away, leaving only a few faithful daisies and purple crocuses in the wood-paths; the leaves of the trees had turned brown, and, fallen to



earth, crisply rustled when the breeze stirred them. The corn and wheat were gathered in, and the hard stubble stretched yellow in a long, level, waveless sea. The Wren had perforce to go a good deal abroad for the sake of provender; but he was more contented now, and his work was lighter to him.

One morning, when he awakened, he was surprised to hear human voices not far off. He was



afraid to move, but, listening, he could at intervals hear the crack! crack! puff, piff! piff, puff! which he remembered so well. So he lay trem-

bling in his nest till the twilight, when he ventured out to learn what the news might be. He was so anxious that, although the rain was beginning to fall, he held on his way. He had not gone far when he was overtaken by the Swallow who had been so civil to him a few months before.

“Ah, Mr. Wren, it is you!” said the Swallow. “I have often looked for you, and wondered what had come over you. It is such a world! I suppose you’ve heard about our neighbours, the Pheasants? They had a cruel end. Flying high above, we could just get a glimpse of it. The men and the dogs and the guns! Ah me! it is perhaps better to be a Swallow or a Wren. Their fine legs did not save them, though they ran—how they ran!—nor their size, nor their bright feathers. Perhaps it was for their feathers the men killed them, who knows?” And here he could not help heaving a sigh that made the Wren respect him more and more. “At any rate, they are nearly all gone, and such things

make a poor Swallow not so unwilling to fly over the sea to a summer country."

"Are you going *now*?" said the Wren in some surprise.

"Just on my way," said the Swallow; "we always meet about the same spot, year after year."

"Always! Have you often gone before, then?"

"Once or twice, at any rate," said the Swallow.

"But how do you do for the rain—it comes heavy now?" demanded the Wren, earnestly.

"Well, we rather like it, as it lets us off so quietly. Every creature has run to shelter; and we hate a to-do, as there would be sure to be else; and only fancy a farewell dinner of all the birds, and speech-making to boot! But I dare say you don't know the ways of men so well as we do." And he shrugged his shoulders expressively. "Here we are, just at the place. If you like to take a seat on that tree, you can see us go. Good-bye!"

And as he spoke, the Swallow pointed to a

high bough, looking down from which the Wren could see a crowd of birds gathered in the shel-



tered hollow below. They were soon joined by others—some Swallows and some not; and sud-

denly they rose in one great wave—the Swallows first—flew right over the dark sea, and disappeared.

The Wren sped back as fast as he could, thinking that perhaps he would miss his friends, as birds must be safeguards to each other against injury; and glad that, being only a dull, little insignificant bird, he had escaped some, at least, of the perils to which other and finer birds were exposed. And when he reached home and told his adventures to his wife, who had been waiting for him very anxiously, she quite agreed with him, that all these things should go together to teach a lesson of contentment, which birds, as well as men, sometimes greatly need to learn.

THE GRAVESTONES AND THE VANE.



A NEW Vane had been put up on the church tower, and suddenly the Grave-stones began to mutter and protest. They had not been known to speak together for a long time before. Content to repose on the strength of their great individual worth, they were apt to look down upon each other; but now

they found
"common
ground"
which

they had been known to jeer and flout at often enough, and agreed to present a petition



to the Vane to come down from his high place. This they forwarded by a Rook of venerable

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appearance and long descent, whom they looked up to simply because his forbears had appropriated the right to a whole colony of elms that lined the churchyard, driving off all other birds most mercilessly—an example which Mr. Rook the present took good care to follow, keeping intact all his territorial rights.

“We will not rest,” said the Gravestones in their petition, “till our request is granted; and if you refuse, we will depart in a body from the place which we have done so much to honour and adorn. A gilded Vane is vanity, more especially when it bows and turns round and round, and looks, when the wind is in the east, exactly like a cross, and, when it is in the west, exactly like a cock. It is sheer profanity, as we conscientiously regard it, to associate the two things so prominently on a church spire, and to fix the eyes of the church-goers on empty trifles, even as they approach unto God’s house for worship. We beseech you, therefore, to take

very serious thoughts of it, in case of *grave* steps on our part, and to have more regard for the souls of those in Providence placed so near unto you."

To this petition, the Vane replied courteously, but with a shortness that was emphatic: "Your petition surprises me. I mean to keep my place, and do my work, which may not be without use, though you censoriously decry it. As for your departing from this place, you cannot do it. The earth is too much for you. Nature's laws and self-interest will combine to keep you where you are. In reproaching others, you should be careful to look to your own ways, and the signs you have upon you and can't get rid of. Many of you bear crosses, and one at least figures Peter's cock for a warning."

The Gravestones took the reproof quietly, and are still where they used to be, among the comfortable fat soil—the best place for them.



THE PEASANT AND THE ROSE.

A PEASANT at the foot of the Alps was one day led to accompany an old friend up the mountain-side as far as they could climb. There he lighted on a beautiful rose, such as he had never seen before. It was so delicate in colour; and he was surprised to find, on examining it, that it had no thorn like the roses that grew in the gardens below.

“Ah!” said he, “this is a prize—a rose without a thorn! why, that’s what folks have been wishing for ever so long. Now, I shall have something none of my neighbours will show the

like of. It is small, but care and culture can do much for size."

To all this his friend said nothing.

With no little labour the peasant dug up the bush and carried it carefully home. That very night he tore up his best double rose, his wife's favourite flower, out of the bed before the door of their cottage, and planted this one in its stead. "The soil is so good there," he said, "it is sure to come to perfection."

So he watched it, and watered it, till his proper work was getting to be neglected, and his wife began to hate the sight of the rose-tree, and said so to her husband one night as they sat together in the lamp-light.

And next morning, when the peasant examined his rose more carefully than ever, he found thorns beginning to grow upon it, and at once accused his wife of winking at a jealous neighbour carrying away the prize and putting a worthless rose in its stead. But he would not be defeated: he set out that very day to climb the mountain and

seek for another thornless rose; and, having found it after much labour, he came home and pulled out the suspected bush, and planted this one in its place. And again he watched and watered, till his poor wife lost all patience with him, and threatened to tear up the rose-tree. In a few days thorns appeared once more. There was no peace in the house any longer. The man spent nearly all his time, whilst his wife worked harder and harder for their daily bread, in seeking for thornless roses on the mountain, and he nearly filled his garden with them; and the neighbours laughed as he went about, early and late, watering them. And when at length autumn came, his beds were filled with stunted thorny bushes which he was ashamed to look upon.

Now he remembered his old friend's silence when he found the first rose on the mountain, and he set off to have his opinion. His friend listened patiently, and then said:—

“My dear Hans, there's no good in trying to train Alpine dwarf roses, and but little good

arguing with a man who fancies he has made a discovery and will outstrip all his neighbours. Let us beware of such vanity: it was there you erred at the first; and see the trouble it has brought you into. Experience is a dear school-mistress, but a rightdown good one. Go home and kiss your wife, and set to your old jobs again."

Hans shook his friend warmly by the hand, went home humbled in heart, and never sought after thornless roses more.

THE MISANTHROPIC DUCK.

“Change for spite and rue it,
And wish you could undo it.”

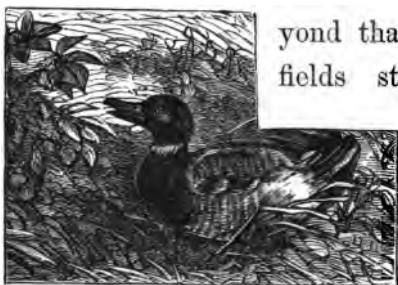
A DUCK that had taken a dislike to some of its friends, determined to find a home for itself as far away from them as possible. “They will miss me, I know that,” said the Duck, “for I have always been ready to do them a good turn, and none has so much as said a good word for me; and now that I am getting a little old, they despise me.” So one fine autumn morning the Duck set forth on his travels just after break of day. There was a clear air, but it was not so chill as to be uncomfortable; and he waddled on as briskly as he could, holding his head high,

and never once looking behind him. He first sped over a stubble-field, stretching out a dull yellow before him; then he swam a little stream; but that was a fine relief, and he had only plea-



sure in the change of exercise; then he crossed another field, and came to a shallow burn, backed by a hedge, and over it he waded; and as he could not find any outlet, he consented to pick

up a snail or two as he ran along in search of an opening. "How sweet they taste!" he said to himself. "I never fell on a daintier morsel. I could stay here for good; but my old comrades *might* get as far as this, so I must move on. Ah! here is a break in the fence—that's lucky." And he stumbled into a meadow that sloped



down to a marsh, and beyond that he could see the fields stretching miles and

miles away, with the hills rising in gentle slopes behind them, till they faded far off into

mist. He was stricken with amazement at the sight.

"Bless me!" he said to himself; the world is wide! and here have I been living till I'm well up in years, fancying the old farm was the biggest part of it. But that marsh down there will suit me excellently, and I'll get there early, before dinner-time."

And finding a choice spot, he sat down to rest. He had not been there very long, however, when a sudden chirping close at his side began to



make him very uncomfortable;* and as it seemed

* It is a fact that the field-cricket begins its chirping at the hour of noon—a circumstance the Duck did not know, but one which is of vast importance.

to increase the longer he listened, he got quite afraid, and was compelled to get up and wander on. But the sound seemed to follow him as he went, and he was fain to run to escape from it. He reached the border of the marsh in a great heat, panting with thirst and lack of breath; and just as he rushed in among the reeds, something suddenly rose, and dashed past him. Looking round, he saw it was a duck, and his thought was confirmed by a sharp "Quack, quack!" It was a Wild Duck which rose in the air over the rushes, and flew rapidly out of view.

"Well!" said the Duck to himself, "this is a sight! This must be a fine spot to live in when ducks can fly like that. None of *us* could. I'll stay here, and perhaps I shall be able to fly too, if I try."

So he set about getting some food, of which there was abundance; and finding a dry, cozy spot not far off, he crept down in it, and soon fell asleep. He had not been there long, however, when he was roughly roused; and,

looking up, he saw the same Wild Duck that had passed him and flown off some hours before, making to peck at him, and looking very angry.



“This is my place,” said the Wild Duck, “so you must be off. You have no business here. The farmyard is your place.”

“Excuse me,” said the Duck, “but I did not

wish to intrude, and had no intention of injuring you. I'll find some other corner to lay my head in, though I do not mean to return to the farm-yard. This sort of life will suit me better."

"Ah!" said the Wild Duck, now looking somewhat interested, "you would like to return to the 'state of nature.'"

The Duck did not exactly know what this meant; but he said, "Yes; I've made up my mind to stay here, and try if I can learn to fly like you. I've always had an ambition that way."

"Indeed!" said the Wild Duck; "I dare say many have the same; but this life has its disadvantages, even with all the flying, and I'm afraid you'll find it rather hard to learn at your time of life."

"I mean to try, at any rate," said the Duck. "Perhaps you could give me a hint?"

"Well, hints are not of much use," said the Wild Duck; "but I don't like to be unkind to any one in difficulties. You can stay there till

you try the life a little," and he pointed to a hole close beside his own nest.

The Duck didn't like to hear himself pitifully spoken of as one in difficulties, but he was sleepy, and sinking down in the rough nest, was soon in a pleasant slumber.

* * * * *

For some days the two went out in company—the Wild Duck showing his barn-door friend all the amenities of the place, and trying to get him to fly.

"Well, really, you succeed better than I thought you would," said the Wild Duck on the third day. "Perhaps if you stick to it your wing-feathers may grow a little, and your body get somewhat lighter. Let us hope so, since you're resolved not to go back to your old place."

"That I am, at all events," said the Duck, "I'd rather die here."

"We'll see as to that, in time," said the Wild Duck. "It's a damp place to die in. I hope myself to be on higher ground when that evil day comes to me."

So they went on for a few weeks, and both agreed that there *were* signs of increasing speed on the part of the Duck, though he was always left behind when the Wild Duck really wanted to go on his usual rounds. He was very good to his barn-door friend, however, and tried to help him, though he was sometimes chagrined that he would turn up his nose at the best morsels that were pointed out to him.

* * * * *

So the days passed on, and the cold of winter came earlier than usual, and the snow and frost fell on everything, and the Duck was greatly tried. Food was hard to get, and there was little rest for him. All his strength seemed to leave him. His greatest grief now was that the Wild Duck was inclined to pass most of his time in a high cliff not far from the sea-shore, where he said he was safer than he was in the marsh in winter-time.

"If I had but a rational creature to speak a word to," said the Duck, with a whine to

himself, "it wouldn't be so bad. I think I could bear it then. I used to hate the ducklings, and all their noise and flutter; but I was, maybe, wrong in that. They might help me now!"

But the Duck only grew worse and worse, and feared he would not get over it; and sometimes wished he had but stayed at home.

* * * * *

One clear, cold morning, when the sun was shining so brightly on the snow that our Duck could scarcely keep his eyes open, he was awakened by his friend, who told him that it was likely they would have some trouble that day. He had already taken a look round, and had seen suspicious signs—dogs sniffing about at some distance, and sounds he didn't at all like. So he was determined to take a flight for safety's sake, and at once flew up into the air, making a sign for his friend to follow him. But the Duck couldn't make much of it; he fluttered and panted, and at last fell to half-running and half-

flying among the reeds, raising a great noise by his efforts, that threatened to attract the men and



the dogs to the spot very soon. The Wild Duck was extremely kind, and waited for a while near

by; but at last he said that he could not risk it longer, and made off to his mountain. Very soon the poor Duck was found. He tried to



run when the sportsman came close up, but was quite exhausted with cold and hunger, was soon taken, and given, out of pity, to a poor man, who put him among his ill-kept hens and

ducks, where he was more contented than he had ever been in the far better quarters of the spacious farmyard; though even here, when he ventured on the pond, the very geese looked down on him, and would peck and beat him, and snatch the daintier morsels from him. And now, for the first time, he heaved a sigh, and wished he had only been wise, and had never left his early home for spite.

THE URN AND THE OBELISK.

AN Urn that had recently been put up on a tomb in a churchyard began to speak with contempt of the other monuments near it.

“You are a set of bastards,” it said; “you look like so many deserters, or ticket-of-leave men, that have escaped from other service or enforced confinement. Some of you are no better than common paving-stones, with ugly letters branded on you, and others like bits of pillars broken off and bundled in here, because found useless for aught else. And as for my left-hand neighbour, he is intolerable—the clumsiest piece of mason-work I ever saw,—all straight lines together!”

Here the Urn broke into a stiff sort of smile—a relief to the classical lisp with which he had spoken.

“As for me,” he soon went on, “I’m ashamed of such society, and wish I could only make shift



to escape, even though it were to be buried below and mix with respectable Dust. My traditions

have always associated me with respectable Dust, and I hate novelties—foreign mixtures, that have no traditions whatever. See my lines of grace that curve inwards so sweetly till they almost lose themselves, and then sweep out again just at the point of vanishing, and so form my pedestal or foot-piece—to make it plain to the lowest comprehension. I cannot but mourn the injury that will be done to my fine sense of form, if my eye have nothing to dwell on but these horrid shapes for days and days,” and here the eyes fell on the Obelisk with a stern reproach. “I wish I could but make shift to escape, though it were only to be buried below, and mix with respectable Dust,” and the Urn actually melted into tears as the twilight fell.

Before morning the wind arose, and the Urn broke, cracked off at the thin of the lower part, and was dashed against the granite Obelisk and fell at his feet among the Dust in fragments.

REVOLUTION IN TOYLAND.



THERE had never been such stir in Toyland. A decree had gone forth from head-quarters that a great experiment was to be tried, by which, it was believed, both the Toys and the Children would be benefited and gratified. The genius of Toyland had spent many nights, when all was still and the children soundly sleeping in their little cots and dreaming sweet dreams of the coming Christmas, in carefully mapping out the country, and had at length laid down laws to his own satisfaction, and had drawn up rules and regulations exactly as the Lord Mayor does when

he is to go in procession to Westminster with all his show. He had never done anything like it before, and was completely worn out by his exertions. For the Toys had petitioned and balloted in favour of Toy-rights, and had compelled attention at last. They said that they and their forefathers had served Child-World well for ages past, and had done something for the intellect and progress of the human race, and yet they were kept year after year in the sorriest condition of serf-hood. They had no desire to be unreasonable, but they claimed to be allowed to exercise a little freewill as humble labourers for the good of the community, and to have *some* say in the disposal of themselves.

Much to their joy their prayer was granted, and it was agreed that on Christmas Eve, at the stroke of ten, they should be set free to dispose of themselves as they would. There were such congratulations and talking over new prospects thus opened up! If you had listened at the door of any of the great houses, where the Toys lodged in large numbers, you would have heard a whisper just

such as you hear in the wood in the summer afternoon when the sun is hot and the wind scarce stirs, and now and then, too, a gentle tapping and pattering like what the rain makes when it falls among the trees. That was the Toys talking and helping each other. There is really nothing like liberty for loosening people's tongues and making them active; so that even the Toys waxed eloquent and busy in prospect of the triumph of their republican ideas.



“Here!” a Jack-in-the-box would say to a well-dressed, flaxen-haired doll girl; “your sash is all awry, my dear, and your hair very much disarranged by the constrained position you have been forced into in that crowded carriage. See, a single touch from me will set you right; for are’n’t we people of taste that sit in *boxes* and look at life like a play that we’ve but little part in?” and here he would break off with a queer nod of the head and a silvery laugh. And to him the barber, with apron in front and spec-

tacles on nose, and all ready to operate, would whisper in this fashion :—

“Now, Mr. Jack-in-the-box, your own head wants combing and frizzling! Come, come, you cannot go into society in that style, even though you have a *box* ;” and Jack would submit to be manipulated, though the first time he retired into his box the hair would to a certainty be disturbed again. Then the Jumping Jack would nod over the top of his pole with a wily wink (for he has never been blessed with much culture or refinement, poor fellow!) to the Dancing Sailor-lad in white ducks and broad blue shirt collar, who would go a-shuffling with his little feet for an instant in response, and so set in motion a ball or two nearly as tall as himself. And then the wooden soldiers, in green and red, standing up so stiff and straight on their hard squares, catching the mysterious infection, would suddenly pass the word and wheel, and turn to the right-about, and rattle their tiny tin guns and swords in a wonderful way; and at this the dogs would bark their own peculiar bark, and

the baby-dolls, all in white from top to toe, would laugh and crow to themselves, and add greatly to the hum and the hubbub. And so, if you will believe me, it went on night after night, till Christmas Eve came. Then, precisely at the stroke of ten, the Toys were set free, and at once betook themselves to their own devices.

But one of the strangest things had occurred that very afternoon. A new genius had appeared among them—a fellow with a remarkable head, and a cap that looked as if it were made of a multitude of little caps and all of green; and he told them that, if they would put themselves in his hands, they could without any trouble have suitable partners; for there were to be no more masters and mistresses, so he said. He told them he had power to grant an honest wish on condition that they pronounced his name once every five minutes, and allowed him to put a cap on their head from his one. If they favoured him in this way and gave him their votes, each Toy would get a number by

which it would be able to find the child it was destined for.

You never saw such a race as there was among the toys. They ran in a crowd, pressing and swaying, so long as the way was lined by the policemen; but the moment they got into the open square they parted, and rushed off helter-skelter—some to this side, some to that. The rules that had been laid down for them so carefully were all forgotten in the effort to keep repeating the name they had pledged themselves to, and in minding their numbers; and with not a few, their caps, that soon stretched out, came down over their eyes, and hindered them very much. Some of them became hopelessly confused and fell, and others fainted or got sick, and had to be taken to the infirmaries. Most of the unfortunates were the Toys of tender nature, whose sensibilities are keen and their feelings warm. The baby-dolls especially suffered, poor things, and began to wish they were taken home, and were but transported to where they had come

from, to be re-done up and wait for purchasers. The Toys that succeeded best were the Gutta-Percha Ball-men, the black India-rubber Elephants, the Wooden Horses, the Drums, the Guns, the Tin Trumpets, and such like; and before



twelve most part of these found themselves, in answer to their wish, reposing at the bottoms of deep depositories by the bedsides of the sleeping children whom they had chosen for their partners.

* * * * *

What a night it was! As the children lay

stirring in their sleep, because they were so full of pleasant thoughts and expectations, the Toys would raise themselves up on tip-toe and peep over the edges at the rosy faces on the pillows; and an over-curious doll or soldier or little woolly dog would sometimes nearly overbalance itself and tip over, and spoil the whole thing by stretching out trying to impress a kiss on the lips that lay so temptingly exposed. And very odd it was too. For a little girl would have a big drum for Toy-guardian; so big that it could not go into the tiny stocking hung up to receive the Christmas visitor, and lay on the top of the drawers or the washstand, looking as though fascinated by its odd surroundings and the unaccustomed air of mystery around it. A little doll would be laid at the bedside of a boy of nine; and a cricket-bat beside a young miss who had been at boarding-school for a whole season, and had only come home for the holidays that very afternoon. And what was more odd than all else put together was, that a big ball would lie

at the side of the little invalid that was never able to rise off her cot in winter or summer or spring.

* * * * *

You may guess how it was in the morning. At first there was much curiosity, then surprise, subsiding into discontent, and at last a general complaint. Many little girls wept. The Toys didn't know what to make of it, and moped and sulked. One boy threw his doll into the fireplace, where, luckily, no fire had been lighted that morning, or there is no saying what might have happened; the little girl dashed her drum on the floor; and the young lady from the boarding-school said *Cui bono?* and went calmly downstairs to her breakfast, which said something for boarding-school discipline, and did a little to restore order and self-respect among the children. For how could little Tommy—aged four and a half—blubber any more, when Emmy showed such self-control and good sense in the circumstances? Tommy said "*Kwee bonny*" also, and

dried his tears, and, after a little while, went down-stairs, too ; and by-and-by the rest followed him ; and then our little invalid turned her face to the wall, and wept for grief as she looked at the ball beside her, which she could never play with.

* * * * *

It was really not like Christmas morning at all. Mamma was sorry to see the children so constrained and unhappy, and was even afraid to ask the reason. But when breakfast was over, she said that they had better run in and see their cousins, a few doors off, who had come home from school the night before, as this would, in her idea, divert their minds a little till she could think what was best to be done. So in they went. And what was their surprise to see that the very same thing had happened there. There were toys for each ; but it looked as though some evil genius had sent them just to make game of the children. Here was a little flaxen-haired girl, who could read and write and do sums in long

division, with a baby's coral and bells : and there, a boy, who was beginning Latin and wore a jacket, with an A B C picture-book, with animals done in colours ; and a young miss of ten with a popgun that could shoot a quarter of a mile at the very least ; and Lucy, who could play the piano, and had set her heart on a music-book, had got a Noah's ark with a hundred animals in it. It was all the worse, of course, that there were no babies in the family here. On seeing this, the visitors broke out a-laughing, which made their friends, at the first, only look graver ; but when they told their cousins that it was just the same with them, the cousins laughed also, and could hardly stop. Gradually it came out that it was the very same in every house. And at length it was resolved to hold a great meeting of parents and children in the Town Hall, where they could talk over matters, and exchange their toys, so that there might be Suitability, Equality, and Fraternity, as well as Liberty. This meeting, though at first it looked as if it would only give

rise to trouble, turned out a great public benefit, and the source of many a lasting friendship. The children were so willing to oblige each other.



The young miss was so pleased to receive from the infant's hand a book of tales for the coral and bells; and the boy who had received the A B C picture-book was delighted to surrender

it to a little toddler, who was all at sea about a ship full-rigged which had fallen to her share, and which he carried home in delightful triumph.



The little invalid sent the big ball by her sister, and was delighted to receive from a black-eyed little fellow a tiny music-box, which she could

just turn the key of, and have delicious music beside her bed as often as she liked. Then, for her drum, one of our little girl-friends got a set



of the most beautifully-marked tiny china tea-cups, which had got but a sorry welcome from its first recipient; and for the cricket-bat, her

sister received the picture-book full of camels and elephants, and lions, and other animals, which were simply delightful to look at. Best of all, Judy, for her popgun, that she had looked at with horror, got the sweetest baby you could think of, with blue eyes, and fair hair under



its wrought cap, and with a long robe as white as snow (which some long robes, as you know, are not)—a baby which could cry when it was pinched,

and do a hundred other wonderful things—a pearl of babies, and the more prized, you may be sure, that it came in exchange for a popgun. And then little Hugh, who had at first got a doll's wardrobe, full of silk dresses and other things, received in exchange for it a fine rocking-horse, on which he is never tired of riding.

The Toys were terribly put about over all these things, and they petitioned to be allowed next year and all years afterwards to do and be done by as they had been for ages; for they said they had had trial enough of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, and had not found it so nice for *them* as they had expected. And so Toyland returned to its old ways of life, and the children still go out and choose their own toys, not grudging the time or the trouble, which the Toys so stupidly sought to save them, as you have heard.



THE CAMEL AND THE HORSE.

“Never trust appearances.”



WELL, I never saw an odder-looking fellow, to be sure,” said the Horse to himself; and he trembled a little, as he laughed a quiet, self-satisfied laugh, such as horses are frequently heard to do while resting quietly in the stable, or while in the middle of their dreams. For the horse sees things magnified, or enlarged, very much beyond the size they appear to human beings; and so you may suppose that, when he dreams, he sees awful sights for size. Occasionally, too,

like some of ourselves, he dreams a little when wide awake.

"He won't make much of a pace," thought the horse, cocking his one ear and looking down, after his rider had dismounted and left



him rather freer; "and what feet, to be sure! the hard road will soon soften them to jelly, I should say."

As for the Camel, he had often before been over the same road as he was going now; and

that was right through the desert. So he was very quiet and thoughtful—not inclined to speak much to any one. But, after a minute or two, the Horse went up quite close, and asked, in a brisk, off-hand tone, whether the roads were good through the desert?

“H’m—well, yes; they’re very broad and level,” said the Camel.

“That’s good,” said the Horse; “and I hope the air is fine and pure?”

“H’m—well, yes; not much can be said against that either,” said the Camel. “There’s no smoke or stench, such as you have in London, to dirty it anyway.”

“And the sun is always shining?” asked the Horse.

“H’m—well, yes,” said the Camel; “the sun is ’most always shining.”

“That’s good, too,” said the Horse. “I suppose folk can make merry in the desert as well as anywhere else?” he inquired.

“H’m—well, that’s much as you choose to

make it," said the Camel, with a lift of his shoulders that a very sharp observer would have noticed.



Just then the drivers came to put the load on the Camel's back. They warned off the Horse,

and the Camel knelt down on his knees to receive his load. The Horse was standing, looking, when he was joined by two others, who, like himself, were much excited about the prospects of a new journey. They trembled considerably; they didn't know how—but they cried out together in surprise when they saw the Camel rise up loaded; and then they broke out into a loud horse-laugh—the very worst sort of laugh going, you know—and declared the Camel was a spiritless blockhead to condescend to such abject ways. None of them would do such a thing—such a weak-minded thing; no, they were horses of a good breed; and blood and culture wouldn't descend to such pitiable vulgarity as that. Then they saw the man bring water to the Camel, of which it drank what appeared to them an excessive quantity.

“A contemptible water-drinker,” said one horse.

“He's never tasted oil-cake in his life,” said the second.

"You can see that by his hide," said the third. "It's as rough as grass, and no mistake."

"Well, I never!" said the first. What a fool he is to fancy water can carry him through the journey. He might just as well fill his belly with the wind. Recommend me to a little bran in it at all events."

And here, everything being now in readiness, the company started. The horses were very much amused for a while, watching the ways of the camel as he went on before. They joked at the swing in his pace, at the humps on his back, at his head held high up in the air, and at his soft feet that made scarce any noise as he went. The camel never seemed to hear them, though they often spoke so loud that he must have done so: their laughing, at all events, was so loud he couldn't but have heard it.

On the second day, the horses took occasion during the rest to upbraid the camel for having deceived them about the road.

~~He~~ did not kick the camel, for his
~~feet~~ ~~was~~ far off. Besides, for all their
~~cowardly~~ cowardly, and had already begun
~~that~~ that the camel wasn't such a fool,

~~They~~ had gone on for three days more,
~~they~~ on all the caravan, for they feared
~~of~~ of a terrible storm—an awful wind
~~like~~ like fiery hail upon its wings,
~~those~~ those who chance to be in its track.
~~slipped~~ slipped down on the sand and buried
~~in~~ in it; the horses whined and complained,
~~could~~ could have run off if they could, but the
~~in~~ in charge of them had tied them to the
~~of~~ of some of the camels. There was
~~for~~ for it now but to follow our Camel's
~~example~~ example, and lie down. The storm lasted
~~some~~ some hours; and then they resumed the
~~journey~~ journey. The horses were all scorched and
~~burned~~ burned, the fine gloss was completely gor
~~from~~ from their skins, and they were in a fever
~~thirst~~ thirst, which the small supplies of wet h

scarcely slaked for a few moments. With what different eyes they now looked at the Camel, who went on as before, with his hide untouched,



his head as high as ever, and his tread as swinging and noiseless as at first. And that night the horses, talking over their condition as they

licked down their scorched limbs quietly in their stable, admitted that Camels knew their own business, and were to be respected because they didn't make great pretensions, didn't speak loud, and were very patient reliable fellows in the desert, which wasn't exactly the place for town-bred horses. They received many kindnesses from the Camel in their straits, and had given him a hearty vote of thanks when they reached the end of their journey, to which the Camel responded in these terms:—"H'm, h'm,—much thanks; 't isn't likely you'll be in the desert again; but if you are, I'll be glad to try and help pull you through. Can say no more than that. Much thanks."

THE PROUD MOTHER.

"Pride goes before a fall."



THERE never was such a brood!" said Tappie to herself, as she lovingly looked at her ten chicks actively making to the road-side before her, where, owing to recent rains, there

were still some traces of water. At this she gave a "cluck, cluck," with all the full heart of the fond mother in it; but finding that the chicks were not to be drawn away by her scratching and clucking, she felt she could only keep up her dignity by following them, making

the most of an awkward position by frankly accepting it, just as though it were the best thing in the world—in fact, exactly what she wanted.

“And what pinched, puny things those are of Trappie’s, to be sure; no sort of colour or plumpness about them. They’ll not come to much, I should say.” And she looked rather scornfully, with her head on one side, at a brood of eleven grey little things which had been brought out just a day after her own.

Though Tappie thought all this to herself, she was a prudent hen, and knew better than to say so to her sister-hen, as it would not have been polite, nor have done anybody good. So she contented herself with eyeing her own children with that peculiar satisfaction which is so readily seen even when a great effort is made to hide it. Tappie thought to herself—

“But what fine healthy fellows these are of mine! With such good training as I will give them they must come to something more than

common! They'll be the cleverest cocks and hens in the parish; and the master will give me an extra allowance of barley on account of my rearing them. But, bless me! what's that? Whitewings—the little wretch!—choking on a worm! Did ever hen have such bold, clever chicks?" And at this she rushed to help her child, which at that moment got the offending morsel over, to Tappie's great relief and surprise; and, heedless of her warning, given in a sharp cack-cack-cackle, at once set to work on the mud again.

Tappie began to scrape and turn up what she thought very tempting grains; but she could not get her chicks to do more than look at her for a moment, and then begin their own work again.

"Very odd," she repeated to herself; "but mine are more than common birds, and I have said so from the first."

Next day, both hens found their way into a field, in the middle of which there was a

dam. Trappie's chicks kept close by her, and seemed to enjoy the new field on which they were allowed to stretch their wings (for fowls take that kind of pleasant exercise with their wings as well as with their legs); but no sooner did Tappie's chicks get a glimpse of the water than they were down and into it, like a set of little fairy boats covered on the top with a tiny umbrella of down. They sailed away; and the mother's heart was too true for her not to feel a little put out. So she stood for a moment quite puzzled; then screamed and flapped her wings, and rushed in a bit, but speedily came out, only to rush in again, to stand there, and see her brood suddenly and all at once topple themselves over, just as if skewers had been run through their little bodies, and they condemned to death. Tappie screamed so loud now that Trappie heard it, and would have gone to the rescue if she had not had some fear of her own brood following such a sad example.

So, pretending not to hear what was going on, she discreetly drew up towards the homestead. Poor Tappie at last retreated, cold and shivering, to the edge of the dam, and waited



for her brood to come to themselves, as she fancied they must very soon do. But they did not seem in any hurry: it looked rather as if they were inclined to go to the other

side and see what was there. Observing this, Tappie made her way round, feeling very small and uncomfortable, for her feathers were thoroughly drenched.

For hours Tappie's chicks sailed about, regarding the terrible state of her feelings as little as if she had not been there; and when they did come out, they behaved as coolly as though they had done nothing wrong. But in spite of this, when once Tappie had got them all together again, she felt quite proud, and said to herself—

“Mine are no common chicks—that's certain: but I mustn't come back here again, for it's not a parent's part to put temptation in her children's way!”

But next day it was proved that Tappie's chicks had memories as well as minds of their own. After pottering about a little, they seemed to be all at once moved with a desire to be at the pond. They made their way there in such decided line of march, that

all that was left for poor Tappie was to helplessly follow them, looking rather woe-begone, and actually forgetting her cheery "cluck, cluck." The scene of the previous day was repeated. Things would have turned out even worse for Tappie, had it not been that she had some relief in feeling that no one saw her; for Trappie, taking warning, had stayed in the farmyard.

Wet and drenched as bad as the day before, Tappie returned home, and next morning was so ill, that the doctor said she had got croup, and must be kept indoors and taken care of. She suffered a good deal; but her chicks took no more notice of it than if she wasn't any mother of theirs. Every day they went to the water, and came back so gorged and sleepy as to disgust Tappie, who, when she was getting better, leaned over one afternoon, and whispered to Trappie—

"Your chicks are doing wonderfully well. Mine turned out bad; but they were most

uncommon fine birds—you must admit that, Trappie, though they were so heartless.”

“Very heartless, indeed,” answered Trappie, as she sat herself more earnestly than before to her clucking and scraping, with a thankful heart that hers were but “common birds.”

THE ORANGE-TREE AND THE FERN.

"What's one's food is another's poison."



WHAT a curious creature you are; where do you come from?" said the Fern to an Orange-tree that had been put beside it in a hothouse some days before. The Fern had several times looked at it curiously; but Ferns are rather slow to make friends.

"I scarce can tell you, just now; I feel

so cold and out of sorts," said the Orange-tree. "I've come a considerable distance, and want to get warm first."

"Warm! aren't you warm here?" cried the Fern at the pitch of its voice, so great was its surprise. "The gardener keeps us all warm enough. I only wish I could get a little more fresh air and water, I'd be all right then, and perfectly contented."

Just as the Fern said this, the Orange-tree gave a deep sigh; and the Fern perceived something like gold in one of its branches that trembled, though almost imperceptibly, as the Orange-tree shivered. And then the Fern noticed that there were several of these balls of greenish-yellow gold here and there amid its flat, rounded, deep green leaves.

"Bless me!" said the Fern; "if you keep gold about you like that, no wonder that you're cold. Misers, I've heard say, are seldom warm; though I confess I don't know much about it personally, having lived a very retired

life, deep in a sheltered spot in the woods, before I was brought down here;" and the Fern put on rather a quizzing look.

"You must excuse me if I contradict you," said the Orange-tree, with a profound Eastern salaam, or low bow; "these are not gold at all—they are my full-grown blossoms, and I keep my seed inside them, else what would be the good of my growing. I beg you not to insult me by naming me a miser again; I've got nothing to do with gold, and I don't want to, either."

"I beg your pardon," replied the Fern: "I had no bad intention, whatever, I assure you. I can see you are not quite well yet, else you wouldn't be so short in the temper with a new acquaintance that means you no harm."

"Oh, I'm some better, now: it's the sudden changes that bother me," said the Orange-tree; "you see we are not accustomed to travel, and don't care much about it; and I've had such a long journey, and there

hasn't been a blink of sunshine to speak of ever since I came here."

"Sunshine!" cried the Fern; "why, it's been blazing hot in the middle of the day for a whole week past, and the gardener's fire has made it like an oven at night. How you can say it's cold I can't for the life of me understand—you've got rheumatics, or jaundice, or something of that sort, and fancy that every one else is wrong because you're ill."

"Not at all, my good fellow," said the Orange-tree, in a conciliatory tone and with a gentle shrug; "but you see we're a delicate family."

"I should say so," cried the Fern, rather sarcastically. "But tell me this: you said these yellow balls were blossoms, and your seed was inside them; but now I've been looking a little closer at you, I see something very like buds and blossoms such as other plants have."

"Oh, yes, these are buds," said the Orange-

tree; and they will be yellow balls when the others have become ripe and have been taken away or have fallen off."

"Nonsense," said the Fern, "you must be mistaken; you would have fruit growing on you nearly all the year round at that rate, and in winter, too. You won't put that in my head so easily, I can tell you. You must have gone wrong in your mind, surely, to talk like that."

The Orange-tree was nearly getting angry at this accusation, but had the good sense to take no notice of it.

"I assure you we bear fruit nearly all the year round, and in winter too; though in our country there are no winters like this."

At this the Fern burst out into a laugh so loud that some auriculas near to it started and looked round. "Winter!" it cried; "why, it's summer, though the season isn't very hot; but I can tell you it's quite hot enough for me."

"Goodness!" cried the Orange-tree, shivering so from head to foot that one of its balls dropped off: "What will I do when winter comes, if this is summer?"

"I know it's hot enough for me," cried the Fern; "I only wish I could get rather more air and water, I'd be right jolly and contented."

"Where do you come from?" asked the Orange-tree, puzzled at the cool, off-taking ways of the Fern, which was a shabby, plain-looking creature, after all.

"Well, not from so very great a distance, either," said the Fern, "though the change to this place rather took on me at the first. But I'm not so delicate as you are, and glad of it, too. My house was under a great Pine-tree, and that was only a few feet from a little stream; so, you see, I had plenty of water, morning and night, and indeed whenever I wanted it; but now, though the gardener does a good deal for me, I feel I shall never be so well off as I was down

there. But I can tell you, it isn't more sun I'm in want of."

And just then the gardener came to water the plants, to the delight of the Fern, that drank it in gladly at every pore; whilst the Orange-tree, utterly unprepared for this treatment, had its breath quite taken away, and felt as though drowned. It could not speak for a long while; and when it did the first word it uttered was to ask the Fern to help it to shake off the wet. But the Fern was so busy enjoying its draught, that it could not hear what the Orange-tree said. The Orange-tree had the politeness to excuse it for this rudeness; and, as soon as the Fern looked up, the Orange-tree whispered:—

"Excuse me, my good friend, but where are your blossoms? I've been watching you this long while, looking for them, and I can't see any!"

"Blossoms!" cried the Fern, "I should say you'd look a jolly long time before you'd find such trifling show-offs about me. I don't despise that sort of thing, by no means; but I don't care to

go-in for it myself. There are more solid things in this world than blossoms, I can tell you : one wants to get a good leaf and stem, and that's what I want to grow. Blossoms!" he said again to himself, and, turning away his head, said once again, "Blossoms!" as he blew the word out of his mouth.

The Orange-tree was quite hurt ; but deemed it prudent, if possible at all, to be friendly. "How can that be," it urged, looking inquiringly at the Fern, "all plants have blossoms, and surely so have you. You may laugh at blossoms, if you like ; but you won't cram me with the belief that you can do without them any more than I can."

"Oh, but I can, though," said the Fern, "I've told you so, and I won't be contradicted by you, either. I get my seeds without the bother of blossoms, and that's enough for me."

"I never heard of such a thing," said the Orange-tree, loud enough to be heard. "A plant that dislikes sunshine, and doesn't have any blos-

soms—it's a *ruse* and nothing else; and what's more, I won't believe it."

"If you call me names, I'll punish you," said the Fern. "Besides, I never said I hated sunshine; but I do say that you're a fool, or else you're mad—one or other, for you said you hated the water to be poured over you—the very thing that I'm so fond of."

The Orange-tree, seeing there was no good arguing more, bade the Fern good night, and resolved to keep clear of debatable matter hereafter, as it was clear that they two could never agree, but determined to be neighbourly, if that was at all possible, because it was a clear duty, and because it was not likely they would manage to get away from each other for a good while.

THE TWO COLTS.

A SIMPLE farmer had two colts that had been brought up together from their earliest days, and had a great affection for each other. They were never separate—where the one ran, the other followed; they lay together, ate together, and drank together; and once, when one was removed for a day or two, the other got dull, and fell into a moody state of mind, and finally became quite restless and violent.

“An odd sort,” said the farmer to himself; “they mean to run together without breaking-in, it would seem. Suppose I turn their fondness for each other to some account, and yoke them into the waggon to-morrow for market, and spare Darby and Joan for the harvest work, that is so

much behindhand. That would be a triumph, and astonish the neighbours. A bright idea!" repeated the farmer to himself; and he struck his thigh with his hand, and chuckled again as he went along. "Certes, a bright idea!"

So in the morning he rose, and, after some difficulty, he caught the colts and tied them together, and drove them down to where the waggon was. The night had been wet and the roads were heavy; but he had set his mind on the thing, and would go through with it.

After a deal of annoyance, that greatly tried his patience, he got them yoked to the waggon, and mounted up on his seat to drive. But no sooner did he pull the reins than the colts began to plunge and kick at each other; and when he applied the whip matters only became worse. At length they started, and ran on wildly for a little space, and then they stopped, and plunged and reared again worse than ever, dashing the waggon against the wall, destroying all the eggs and other things, and bruising the poor farmer,

who at last was glad to cut the traces and let them go where they chose. And as he went home, his bones twitching with pain, he reflected that, perhaps, greater care must be taken in tying together either beasts or men, even although they may have hitherto loved each other well.

THE BEAVER AND THE MOLE.

"Never try to injure the weak; for none are so strong but the weak may injure them."



WELL, but, of course, I can't see my way," said the Mole; "I would like very well to join you in your enterprise, but I am not on an equal footing with you, you know. You are so sharp and industrious, and such a good builder."

"You can burrow better than we can," said the Beaver, "and that's the main thing at first,

at all events. This is a new speculation, you know, and building isn't so much needed as burrowing."

"Very well," said the Mole, "I shall try my best:" and so it was settled that they two should go together to sink a mine, where great wealth was certain to be found, but which could only be done by destroying a whole colony of Ants.

Now it was so well known as to be notorious among all the acquaintances of the Beaver, that he had a profound contempt for the Mole, and spoke of him constantly in such language as was very unbecoming to be used towards a fellow-creature. He said he was a blind beetle, and of no use but to burrow. And when the project of the mine was started, he professed friendship to the Mole just that he might lead him into mischief: for there was no likelihood of the great wealth being got which the Beaver had painted in such glowing colours to the Mole. The real truth was that the Ants had deeply injured the Beaver, as he thought, by declining to give up certain roots of trees, which he wished to

appropriate bit by bit to his own use; and they had armed themselves in defence of them and would not give in. They almost killed the Beaver one day by getting into his eyes and nearly blinding him. The only thing he could do was to roll over and over on his back in the sand and mud and try to throw the ants off. But his eyes swelled so he was nearly blind; and, as all his friends and acquaintances laughed at his appearance, he never forgot the indignity, and was determined that, by fair means or foul, he would have the upper hand of the Ants.

So, being cautious and thoughtful, he stayed at home for a day or two, and plotted and plotted; and at last he hit on what he thought a capital plan. He would get up a scheme of a mine right under the Ants' colony, and would get the Mole to help him to do the work, and encounter all the danger, while he laughed safe on the surface, enjoying the fun and pretending to watch.

Well, the work was begun. The place was not very far distant from the Beaver's house, so that it

was nearer water than the Beaver had let out to the Mole. The Beaver was very hospitable, and would frequently swim over to his dome-shaped house in the lake for supplies, carrying with him



pieces of wood in his teeth, perhaps from mere habit, as though he were still building a house, or perhaps it was in order to mislead his neighbours as to what was really going on. So the work went forward for some days. The Beaver was very

impatient, but he saw what mounds of earth the Mole was turning up, and was determined to wait with patience. All he did himself was to remove the earth from the mouth of the hole as it was cast up and keep a sharp look-out round about him.

But one day the Mole came up into the light, looking as despondent as a creature can look that has no eyes to show its feelings by; and he said to the Beaver that it was quite impossible that a blind creature could go on any farther, as eyes were needed to tell what could be done with a tremendous hole that seemed to open right under near where he was working.

"Is it so deep you can't step across it?" asked the Beaver.

"How can I tell?" replied the Mole; "I'm blind, as you know. Why, that's exactly what I wish to know before I go any further, so as to save running risk to both of us."

"Is it a spring?" asked the Beaver.

"Really, I don't know," said the Mole; "it may be."

"I hope not," said the Beaver, that would play mischief to us. You might go down again, and just listen if you hear anything, and come up and tell me what it is."

"Perhaps my ears are as dull as my eyes, and not to be depended on down there," said the Mole; "so there's no good my going down again, unless you go first. If you like, I'll follow close behind you."

"But there will be no one to watch, and nobody knows who might come when we're down there."

It just struck the Mole as being rather odd that the Beaver should have been so anxious to get the work done, and should now be so afraid to take a look at it; so he said: "Oh, I'll watch for a few minutes, and then come down too."

So, after a great deal of humming and hawing, the Beaver went down, and, before he had gone far, there rose a terrible sound; for the Mole had burrowed in a sort of zigzag; and, when the weight of the Beaver went on one part, it fell in, and then that below it fell in; and so on, till

he was buried deep down, with the weight of earth upon him, and in the very pit which he had planned to destroy others. At any rate, he was never seen again by the Ants, who would not believe that the Mole hadn't planned it all, because they persisted that, in spite of the Beaver's conceit, the Mole was so far from being blind, that he had the sharpest pin-head eyes of all animals; and they made a promise of great fellowship with him, which lasted for a long while, if it does not even hold still in some parts of the world.

THE TWO HERMIT CRABS.

"Better flit than fecht."—Old Scotch Proverb.

I TELL you, I won't give it up to you," said Crab No. 1.

"And I won't give in to you," said Crab No. 2. "I'm the strongest, as you can very easily see; and besides, as I've grown faster than you have, the chances are that my old house is less comfortable for me now than yours is for you."

"I was here before you," said Crab No. 1; "it's a great sin and shame, and you know it. I've carried this shell-house right over that great heap of sand, and now you come and claim it. I won't give in," cried Crab No. 1 louder than

before, though his voice now and then got near to a whimper as he cast his eye on the handsome house which Crab No. 2 had now taken hold of with his tail, and was fitting on to his back to carry it away to where he lived.

"You're a story-teller," roared Crab No. 2, as he went on nervously fingering round the rim of his treasure; "who knows whether you were ever here before; I've only got your word for that, and I don't believe it, and so the house is mine. It will suit me better than it will you; you're too small to fill it, so you'd better just go off quietly, and try to find another for yourself. If you don't you'll get the worst of it, so I tell you, and no house to boot."

"I will not go off and seek another; that house is mine, and I'll have it." With this he made at Crab No. 2 with his claws, and fixed them right in the breast where there was no shell to protect it as in other Crabs. Crab No. 2 had laid too much stress on his being so much the stronger of the two, and was taken at

a disadvantage, for he had the house on his back, and for a moment could not get rid of it. His prize proved his great drawback, and Crab No. 1 quickly followed up his advantage, and struck his fellow fiercely in the eyes. But Crab No. 2, though rather stunned by the first blow, speedily recovered, and, throwing off the house, went at the weaker Crab very wildly. At first he guarded himself well; but, finding the blows come rather thick, he was just about to retreat when a Sand-eel, having heard the noise of the quarrel, put up his head through the sand and asked what was the matter. He was much disturbed by the noise they were making, he said, and warned them to stop. As he stood right between the two, they were compelled to wait awhile. The Sand-eel carefully eyed both for a moment, and then said—

“Pretty fellows you are to have for one’s next-door neighbours, to be sure! Why, there are hundreds and hundreds of such houses lying about twenty yards off, just beyond that little

hillock there, and yet you go and fight over this paltry thing, and disturb the whole neighbourhood, and injure each other the same as if you were creatures of different species. Fie, for shame!" the Sand-eel went on, closing his eyes and looking very solemn; "no other creatures would fight about a shell the way you do; I'm sure *we* never would."

At this Crab No. 1 began to tell his story, with which the Sand-eel was rather inclined to sympathise at first; but just at that moment a Lobster came up in his purple coat, and having heard what had taken place, he declared that both parties were in the wrong. Crab No. 2 had nothing but Crab No. 1's words for it, and it was exactly the same with Crab No. 1. There was no use trying to do strict justice in this world—he had a doubt if there was such a thing as justice—they had better just cast lots over it; anything was to be preferred to fighting and destroying each other. On this he threw up his claw and struck it on the sand, and looking at

the marks made, declared that the result was in favour of Crab No. 2.

The Sand-eel at this was about to protest when the Lobster caught him a blow with his tail; then he very politely bowed and begged Sand-eel's pardon, and declared that it was only a habit of his, and that for the life of him he could'nt help it. But he really meant no harm, none; and hoped Sand-eel wouldn't mind it, but would express his thoughts freely. Sand-eel readily forgave him; but, being of a shy and sensitive cast of disposition, all his ideas clean vanished, and he was completely unable to say what he had intended in favour of Crab No. 2.

"We'll consider it settled now, then," said the Lobster; and hereupon he bade them all good-day, and retired behind the little hillock to watch what would come of it; for, though he pretended to be friendly, he only liked the hermit Crabs when they were dead. If they fought, he fancied he would get some profit out of it. The Sand-eel, fancying all was settled now when

the Lobster said so, disappeared, his thoughts being all confused. No sooner were the two Crabs left to themselves than, instead of going on their separate ways, they came close to each other again.

"The Lobster said it was mine," cried Crab No. 2.

"I don't care what the Lobster says; he's a sneak, and a meddler in other folk's matters," roared Crab No. 1. "The house is mine; I had it before you came near it." And the fight began again as fierce as ever. They fought for a long while, till Crab No. 2 unexpectedly fell over a mussel-shell, and Crab No. 1 seized the opportunity to strike him in the weakest part; and, leaving his enemy for dead on the field, carried off the house, notwithstanding that he felt very much exhausted. The fact that he was in the right had no doubt somewhat helped him.

When the Lobster saw this, he came stealthily from his hiding-place behind the hillock. He chuckled when he saw that it was Crab No. 2 that

lay there for dead. "Ah, it's the biggest," he said to himself; "but who would have thought it—anyway the tastier morsel for me, no doubt of that. It's best to get along pleasant, and make yourself safe however things may turn out when others quarrel and fight like that, silly creatures!" And here he seized hold of Crab No. 2, and was in the act of moving him along, when to his great surprise he found he wasn't dead after all, but had only been stunned; for now he suddenly laid out with his claws, hitting the lobster's eyes and blinding him. As the Crab was pounding at the Lobster, up came the Sand-eel with a Conger-eel—a friend of his—whom he had chanced to meet as he was on his way home, and whom he told about the quarrel that was going on near-by. The Conger-eel had expressed a wish to come and see how affairs were going. He said Conger-eels were not naturally given to intermeddling; but in a case like this, it was the duty of every one to do all in his power to promote peace; he would do what he could—more especially as he and

his family had always had a tender interest in crabs and lobsters, whom they respected for their good qualities, though sometimes they found them rather thick skinned, and inclined to be mischievous if meddled with. So the two went on, talking all the time, and when they reached the place they found the Lobster worsted, and the Crab taking rest. The three agreed that the Lobster was a dishonest knave; and so the Conger-eel was empowered to carry him off to his own quarters; which, with the aid of the Sand-eel, he did; and he made a good meal of him. As for Crab No. 1, he confessed to the Sand-eel afterwards, that it would have been better after all, if he had gone a little farther to the other side of the hillock, and found a house there, without fighting in the way that he had done. "But it is never too late to mend," he finished off, and at once set out, notwithstanding that he was still suffering somewhat from the effects of the late encounter, to find another house for himself, which he was not very long in doing. After a short roundabout, he soon found himself

near his former quarters, and his old enemy not far off. But the two Hermit Crabs, having learnt



a good lesson, knew better than to fall out again, and they lived close together for a considerable time in a most amicable manner.

THE TOWN SPARROW AND THE COUNTRY SPARROW.

"Rolling stones gather no moss."



I DON'T see what good you are here," said the Country Sparrow to the Town Sparrow, that had gone for the first time a few miles out of town into the open country to try if it could settle there to advantage. "I'd advise you to go back the

way you came," wound up the Country Sparrow, with a sort of sneer.

"And that I won't," said the Town Sparrow; "I'll stay here, if it was only to spite you;" and he turned his head on one side, and looked as determined as he could.

"You'll regret it; mind my words," said the Country Sparrow. "No good comes of spiting people: you should look better after your own interests, and not try what you wasn't born to."

"Who is trying what he wasn't born to?" cried the Town Sparrow, ruffling his feathers, and turning up his black eye very defiantly. "If you talk to me in that way I'll chastise you, mind that; you're a boor, else you would never treat a distant relative in that way. It's surely harder living in the town than it is here. I'll manage quite well without your rustic advices—they're not so much worth as all that comes to."

"Very well; we'll see," said the Country

Sparrow, with a sneer; "rustic advice is very good for rustic people, an' mind, you're a rustic now—a *would-be rustic*"—and he laid such emphasis on the two last words as made them sound very ironical.

"You are a mean wretch," cried the Town Sparrow, as loud as he could after his second cousin: "You're afraid that I'm cleverer than you are, and will get more grains."

"Not a bit; there's no fear of that. Take care of your beak!" returned the Country Sparrow, as he flew away.

"Take care of your beak!" repeated the Town Sparrow to himself; "what can the fellow mean. He's a low-bred thing to talk in that nasty way, to be sure. I'm well rid of his company, at any rate."

The Town Sparrow now set himself to work on the heap in the farmyard, on which the two had met on this occasion, and over which they had so nearly quarrelled. The grains were so much sweeter than any he had

ever picked up in the streets, that he ate till he felt quite gorged and sickly, and was almost unable to fly. Besides, he had no proper nest to go to, and had to put up with the branch of a tree. He tried to get into a crevice of a farmhouse; but he was frightened off by two large tortoiseshell cats that were prowling there, and seemed to jump about the low roof just as if it were a floor. He felt rather afraid as he took up his quarters on the tree, and heartily wished that he had made friends with his country cousin; but he was quite unable to go farther. "It's no good," he said to himself; "I might go farther and fare worse;" and so he perched on the tree and went to sleep. But he hadn't slept long, when he felt pains all over him; for, being unaccustomed to the green grains, they had swelled on his stomach and made him very uncomfortable. He thought of his country cousin's words against people "trying what they wern't born to." He felt he wasn't born to have so much grains, and

wished now that some of them were in his country cousin's stomach instead of in his—though, when he was eating them, he chuckled at the thought that the grains were better than his country friend was getting.

However, he managed to pass the night; but next day he was so unwell that he could not eat anything, though he saw whole hillocks of dainty bits—ants and insects of all kinds, as he crept painfully along through the wood.

“What’s the good of it,” he said to himself, “when I am in this sore strait and can’t touch a thing?” and he began to cry for sheer vexation. He lay for a good while, and then went on again; and so the day passed over. At night he was forced once more to go up into the branch of a tree. Not having slept much the night before, he soon fell asleep, and was awakened in the moonlight by a strange cry near him. Looking up, he saw the strangest pair of eyes it had ever been his lot to see, though he had seen many men and animals in

the city. They were large and clear like globes of fire, and were so fascinating that he could not move an inch, though he tried all he could.

Then there was a sort of purr and whirr, and something like a hand took hold of him; and he knew no more till suddenly a loud crying and screaming broke on his confused ear, and he felt himself falling to the ground. The owl had met an enemy on his way to his house, and had had to drop the prey he was bearing home for his breakfast. The Town Sparrow was lying in this most forlorn condition, his feathers all broken and creased and his breast bleeding, when his old friend, the Country Sparrow, chanced to pass that way in the morning.

"Well, here's some poor wretch been in the owlet's claws, where any of us may soon be—who can tell?" And then he stooped down and spoke kindly to the sufferer. Finding that the poor fellow was able to understand what

was said to him, our country friend whispered in his ear that if he could only creep a little further down the wood something might be done for him. The progress they made was very slow, but at last they reached the house, where the sufferer was put to bed. He was able in a few days to put his thoughts together; and then he reflected how lucky it was that the Country Sparrow did not know him. His feathers all came off and his beak got quite soft, and seemed as if it would fall off, too. By-and-by he got better, but the Country Sparrow did not recognise him till he was just about to leave for his old home in the town, determined to attempt no longer to be a country sparrow, but to remain an honest town sparrow as he had been born.

“And so,” said the Country Sparrow, who was a very kind-hearted, as well as a shrewd, sensible fellow, “it was you that gave me the impudence that day. I would have helped you all the same; but take care after this, for you never know who may be able to aid you,

especially when you're on your travels and in strange places. It's not likely we'll ever meet again; but I saw by your beak you was never meant for a country sparrow, and I say so still. I don't think I could be a town sparrow, and I won't try it, I can tellee: it is with birds as with men, as I'm told—one can only do well what one was born to."

The Town Sparrow was just about to give his friend a warm invitation to town, and said so; but the Country Sparrow laughed, and said he'd only be out of place and be miserable all the time; and as for sights, he saw plenty of them.

So they parted, with much good-will, and the Town Sparrow ever after spoke of country sparrows with the greatest respect, and sometimes nearly fell out with his old companions for his extreme views on that score. But his maxim now was not to quarrel with any one, if he could help it.

THE ROSE OF SHARON AND THE ELM-TREE.

A GARDENER had planted a Rose of Sharon under an Elm-tree, thinking thereby to protect it from wind and rain, and get a better growth. No sooner had the summer come and the Rose begun to put forth its buds, than it looked up at the protecting branches with surprise and anger. The Elm, too, was surprised; but he felt no anger, because he knew where the strength lay.

“How dare you come between me and the light of heaven as you do?” said the Rose. Instead of getting fine flowers as I used before I came here, I believe I’ll scarcely manage to burst a bud even. They’ll all fall off and die, if you don’t relieve me.”

“ Oh ! ” said the Elm, “ you’re getting sickly and misanthropic, and ungrateful to boot. Why, don’t I shield you from the wind, and the rain, and the sun, and drop the shower down on you just like dew from my branches, which are so fine that they are a capital veil for you when the sun is too strong ? ”

“ That’s good ! ” laughed the Rose in scorn. “ Why, you keep the shower from me till you are filled with it yourself, and then you throw it down on me in bucketfuls that drench and half-drown me, and do me no good. And then in the morning you keep all the sun from me—the morning sun that I need so much—and expose me to all the fierce rays in the afternoon. I am faint always before night ; and will soon be but a common rose unless you relieve me ? ”

“ But that I can’t,” said the Elm. “ The gardener has put you there, and there you must remain for me.”

“ Very well,” said the Rose, “ but the gardener won’t get much for his pains. If I am to bear

the fine flower he desires so much, he must put me into the free light of the sun. Otherwise I cannot help myself, and must lose my colour and fragrance, and be like any common rose."



The gardener waited for a few seasons, till it seemed as though the Rose had pined to death; and, taking it for actually dead, he, in great disappointment, pulled it up by the roots, meaning to cast it away. But he saw that it was not dead, that the roots were alive, and, on second thoughts, he resolved to plant it in an open border away from the Elm's shade. Before another couple of years had passed there was no rose like it in the countryside. All the colours of the rainbow were in it; it grew double flowers, and while it had something

of all other roses, it was exactly like none of them, and its fragrance was so sweet, that the gardener was offered almost fabulous sums for it. But he told all comers that he would give them a slip, and they could rear such roses for themselves; but they must take care not to plant it under the shade of an Elm-tree as he had foolishly done at first.

THE PAGE AND THE BARNYARD FOWLS.

A PRINTED Page had been blown by a west wind into a farmyard among the fowls, and straightway a great cackle and discussion arose over it. Some maintained that it was nothing but blank white paper, exactly the same as they had seen many a time, and others said that it wasn't. A London chicken—of an old respectable breed, but now much degenerated, being weak on the legs and big-bellied—turned his head on one side and eyed it with critical care, and then waxed loud in his assertions that there was nothing on it; and to prove what he asserted, he wished to tear it in pieces with his claws. Then a Turkey-cock from a northern district, that

walked about with a great flutter, came forward, and, seizing the Page, tried to gobble it up altogether; but having already over-eaten and over-drunken himself, he had to cast it up again uninjured. A Monkey that had chanced to escape from a caravan just then, at this point darted into the midst of them, and throwing down the mirror, which he had carried off with him, though it was the common property of the Monkeys in the show, declared that he was ready to instruct *all* the Fowls. So odd and laughable was his appearance that the Fowls did not run off, as might have been expected, but stood, stricken with amazement, at the creature's antics. The Turkey-cock, like some others, bold by help of a full belly, went bravely forward to gobble up the mirror that lay at the Monkey's side, when, suddenly seeing his own reflection in it, he declared that the Monkey had stolen his image.

"And you're a pretty creature for anyone to steal your image, as you call it," said the Monkey.

“Your ugly red nose is quite enough to tell what breed you’re of!”

And here the Turkey-cock, whose loud words and coarse blustering ways used to terrify his littler companions, made at the Monkey in a rage, as though to tear him in pieces. But the Monkey, too quick for his enemy, jumped aside, and then swung on to the Turkey’s back and fixed his teeth in his neck, and held firm there till the Turkey-cock gave-in, and meekly apologized. Then the Monkey got down, and taking up the Page, fell to turning it over and over, and quizzing it and trying to nibble its edges. He chanced at length to lift up the mirror in the other hand, while the fowls watched, and in an instant the Turkey-cock and the London Chicken fell into raptures over the beautiful Page they saw in the mirror, and begged the Monkey to keep it in that exact position till they could run and bring their friends to see it.

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In their absence, the Monkey, unfortunately,

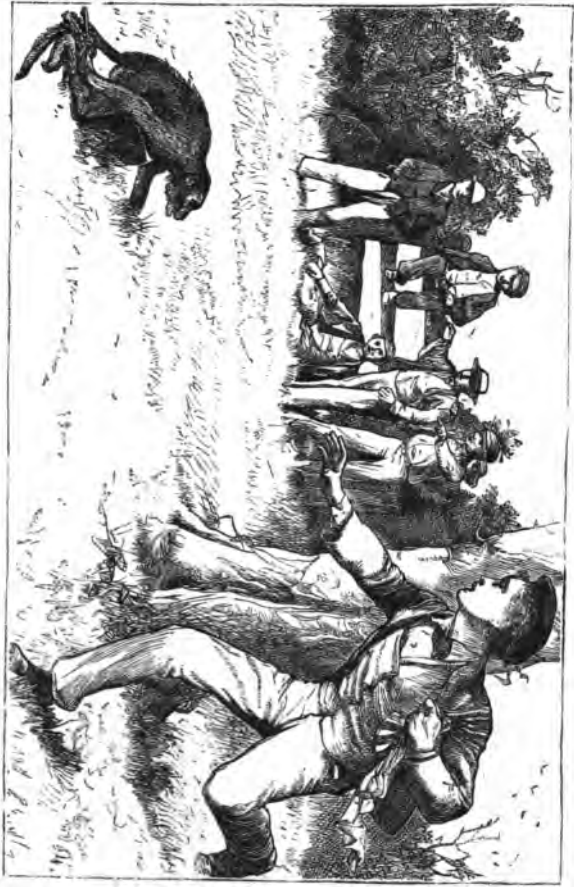
let the Page blow away, and when the Chicken and the Turkey-cock returned with their friends—the Duck and the Black Rook—he was sitting holding the mirror in the one hand and looking at his face in it, while he scratched his ear with the other hand. They came up behind him quietly to see the wonder ; and all agreed that it was an uncommonly fine Page ; and the Black Rook, who had betrayed his own order, though he still lived among them for convenience sake and fat easy living, was hired to publish abroad as far as he could the news of the marvel they had seen.

So the birds sat down to enjoy themselves together, and talk over matters, while the Monkey ran about the yard, picking up odds and ends, and now and then a dainty morsel. The Black Rook, with quick instinct for his own safety, saw that there was danger in his remaining too long, and was off to a tree among the other Rooks, just before the farmer came into the yard. The Monkey

made off as soon as he saw the farmer approach ;
but a chase was set on him by the boys, and,



after a considerable run, he was seized and put
in close confinement ; the birds were well beaten



for the noise they had made; and in the Page, which was found the day after, in one of his fields, the farmer read with delight of a new mode of drill-sowing which, next year, greatly increased his crops.

THE STRANGE TRIO.

"Homely sense and humility are
Greater than special gifts, by far."



IF you had been in the Monskew Museum one day in the latter end of last summer, you would have seen and heard something really wonderful. That is, if you had been very attentive, and if your mind had been perfectly free from distractions, such as envious thoughts of the toys and good things which may have fallen to the share of your brothers and sisters and companions. For envious people don't see one-half the curious

things that are going on. They eat their hearts out, as the common saying is ; and it is astonishing how, when the heart is meddled with in this way, the eyes and the ears, and, indeed, all the senses, come to be affected by it. Well, considering this, it is no wonder that but few people know of the memorable day in the Monskew Museum, which I wish to tell you about.

Busy, busy, had the gardeners been, through the weary hours, tending and watering the curious Eastern plants in the great glass-house ; and the stream of ladies in silks and satins, and gentlemen in elegant summer suits, had been incessant ; but it was good for all, considering the close state of the atmosphere, that none of them were inclined to stay long there. It was getting well up in the afternoon, and the buzz of conversation was not so loud as it had been, when suddenly the visitors who remained were thrown into the deepest consternation and excitement by a loud report like gun-shot, which seemed to come from a corner the building. The men who were watering,

dropped their watering-pots, and some who were mounted on high ladders, attending to the giant palms and cactuses and ferns, slid down faster than they had ever done before. One lady fainted; another screamed; and a third cried and clung round her friend's neck; while more than one gentleman ran outside, fancying that, being swift of foot, they would be sure to capture the offender and receive public thanks for their spirit and activity. But nowhere was there visible any sign of the delinquent; and the cause of all the uproar for the time being remained a mystery.

But if you could only have listened, as one clever boy did, to the talk which passed that afternoon between three plants in a remote corner, which had the one advantage of being nearest to the furnace, you would have been both relieved and enlightened. True, there is nothing more confusing and apparently unintelligible than the gabble of flower dialects; but, like many other things, it comes easy when once you have got the key to it. First of all, in this case, the ear

was caught by a steady hum as of bees round a hive ; then, gradually, by a sharper and more definite note breaking in at intervals, like the chirp of a grasshopper, but lower ; and then, listening by a conscious effort of will, you could catch what were clearly cries of pining pain, and yearning regret. It was like this :—

“ Oh, for the sun ; for the lovely land, where every wind blows spice—where the air is full of love, and summer always reigns, and even the night is soft and balmy—where the stars, clear but never cold, look down from untroubled skies, and the wine of Shiraz delights the heart—where the songs of Saadi are the joy of the soul, making Love and Friendship doubly divine, and where Hafiz is held in unfailing remembrance. Oh, an evil day was that on which I was carried from my home—where the rose and the nightingale were my faithful friends, and the tulips and the birds of paradise devotedly attended me.”

“ What ! ” a thin voice seemed to say, when

this protest came to a momentary pause, "do you mean to say that you are an Oriental like me?"

"An Oriental, yes—from the far, far East—the land of the sun—of Hafiz and Saadi; did you not hear me say it?"

"Hafiz and Saadi! I never heard of them before; but the East is my home too; so, perhaps, we may contrive to help each other in this cold country."



"You an Oriental, and never heard of Hafiz and Saadi — impossible! I'm afraid we needn't

try to have common dealings. You seem to be all blood-red tufts, and odds and ends to me, as if you were meant to suggest disagreeable thoughts; and you look as if you had no leaves at all, and were all blossom. I never heard of a flower like that in the far East where I dwelt—in the land of Hafiz and Saadi."

"That may be; and, as I said, I never heard

of Hafiz and Saadi; but I can tell you that in our island there were trees as stately and nice looking as you are; and, though I would rather not



Fan-Palm of the South Pacific.

quarrel in a strange land, it has not been our habit to let ourselves be put upon; for, though I have no wish to boast, we have had soul-secrets committed to us often enough, and, as you say,

suggested ideas disagreeable and otherwise, if that's anything! There the palms—even the lofty fan-palms—and the nut-trees of all kinds were



Sacred Oak of the South Pacific.

esteemed inferior to us, and we had great authority. Even the sacred oak was but counted our equal."

At this, in spite of the pain the other was evidently feeling, a smile passed over his coun-

tenance, as he said, looking down condescendingly.

"Oh, as to that, I could boast, too; many a mystic meaning my leaves have borne, and my flowers, as well; but I'd rather not go into that."

"Well, you certainly don't seem blessed with much flower, blood-red or otherwise," was the retort; "and, on the whole, you seem to me tolerably common-place; I wish I could compliment you on being anyway out of the ordinary."

At this point a third plant with a long stem bent over towards the two, and said that trees that flowered so easily must be little worth—especially if leaves were wanting; for leaves were quite as necessary to Beauty as flowers, and far more necessary to Use. As for their friend, considering the colour of the blossoms, a little green would be an improvement—a refreshment to the eye. Nature had a great respect for the happy medium, and this really seemed to be unnatural!

"I don't pretend to philosophy," said the other seriously, as his companion bent over to feel the wood.

"Bless me, how soft you are for a shrub of your size; I could crush you to pulp between my fingers without much effort."

"And that should show you that Nature has ways of her own, and should lessen your conceit of knowledge," was the retort. "Though I'm so very soft I last for centuries, and have even been said to be imperishable. I have no doubt that I'm the oldest plant in the place, and that I'll see you all out, in spite of my softness. But I would never mention such things as these, if I didn't meet with very conceited people."

"Centuries! do you say? I have reason to know something of centuries; why don't you know I'm the Century Aloe—no less; and how could I be that if I didn't see a long age. You are too ready to fancy that people you meet are like yourself, and tell lies just to look big. My Persian cousin here, who has something in common with me, yet differs in more, claims to live to a long age, as I understand him, and he'll tell you that what I say is true."

But the Persian cousin, who held his head high, and evidently hadn't been listening, broke in—

“Ah! Hafiz and Saadi, though they did not sing my charms in so many words, right well did they know me. My flower is coming, it will soon burst—then you will both see and hear, and say that I am unlike to any other, and of a beauty that surpasses all others.”



Then the Century Aloe began to speak about the mysteries of flowering; picturing the fine spot on the hill-side where of old it grew, and was entering on a learned disquisition (for people who produce little are often the most learned) when that loud report as of a gun-shot close at his ear quite stunned him. The uproar that followed made

the flowers so stupid that it was a considerable time before they could collect themselves sufficiently to observe their friend, the Persian Talipot's flower, so large, so soft, so pure, so fragrant.*

* * * *

When they did so far recover themselves the Aloe could scarce keep his eyes off the beautiful flower, and was so filled with emulation that he could not help wishing that his own day of flowering was near at hand. So anxious was he not to be behind his neighbours that he forced the growth and seemed to have spoiled the flower, besides that, happening in the night, no one heard *his* cannon-like report, save the watchman, who was so bemuzzed with beer, that he only rubbed his eyes and fancied he had been dreaming of the old bombardment of King Theodore's fortress, where he had lost his left hand. The keeper, on looking the next morning, was rather mortified

* It is perhaps needful to say that this is the simple fact : when the Talipot-tree of Persia bursts its buds there is a report as of a gun-shot—in this so far resembling the Century Aloe of America.

to see the little light-red aloe-flower, and blamed himself for missing the occasion through a miscalculation. And no sooner was the Aloe in flower than it began to mourn that it attracted so little notice. For now that it was known through the newspapers that the Talipot-tree had been the cause of the great uproar, all the attention was given to it. People came from far and near to see it, and artists were glad to get a chance to draw its portrait. The Aloe was quite cast down. Through all the weary years, it had yearned for the moment when its century should be complete and its hour at length come; and now the whole had been spoiled by an undue spirit of emulation.

“ Oh,” it said, “ I see how it is now—to make a fine flower, one must think of nothing but the joy of growing, and all one’s heart must be put into that;” and suddenly, as he spoke, the flower unfolded its leaves, and there lay, as it were, within it, another flower, yet lovelier and more perfect. But still the crowds came and looked at

the tall Talipot-tree, and carelessly passed by the Aloe, which shrunk within itself more and more, and the fine flower at length shrivelled and died before its time.

And so it turned towards its other friend and



Coral-tree of the South Pacific, in blossom.

whispered, "You see what deference the world pays to loud reports, and how it is not always even the loudest that gets the most credit; for you'll admit mine was much the louder report, though I'm the smaller plant; and yet, I know as

well as you, that a report like that cannot really add anything to a *flower's* worth. The two things are quite different; they appeal to different orders of sensation—sight and sound—and yet if one were to credit one's own senses one might almost believe that sight and sound were the same ;” and here, on turning to look at his friend and ask his opinion, he could hardly believe his eyes. Instead of the pyramidal tufts of blood-red flowers, the plant was now almost covered with green leaves of exquisite form, and the flowers had all vanished.* It was a surprising transformation ; and he was fain to admit to himself that it was even more wonderful than that he should flower only once in a hundred years, and, like the Talipot, of Persia, announce his flowering with a report as of a cannon-shot.

* The Coral plant (*Erythrina Coralodendron*) of the South Pacific Islands has no leaves when it blossoms and no blossom when it is in leaf. Its flower is of a deep blood-red colour ; and probably on account of its colour, its blossoming was, in former days, supposed to indicate the time for the flight of disembodied warrior-spirits to Paradise. . It is almost imperishable, yet the wood is soft and worthless.—See Mr. Wyatt Gill's interesting articles in *The Sunday Magazine* for Oct. and Nov., 1873.

All this while the Coral plant was dreaming on, glad in the thought of its beautiful array of leaves, at a time when most other plants begin to shed theirs, and looking forward to its next flowering season with a great calm joy.

THE RIVAL SINGING-BIRDS.

A BLACKBIRD and a Wren, in the depth of winter, chanced to perch at the same moment upon a holly-bush, and at once fell a-wrangling over their claims to the berries.

"I'm the biggest," said the Blackbird, "and I have the sweetest note."

"That has nothing to do with it," said the Wren; "the Robins and I have the best right, because we attend to the hollies and spend our days more among the hedges than you do."

"That's nonsense," said the Blackbird, "else why has Nature given us such a liking for the berries? If you go on the way you're doing, we'll have to show you that Might is Right, and

then you'll come off but poorly, for you're a small shabby creature at the best."



Just then a Thrush flew by, and hearing the sound drew near. Knowing the sweetness of his

voice, they agreed to refer the case to his judgment. After hearing both sides, the Thrush said that singing could not of itself entitle a bird to



berries, nor could the mere fact of residing in the bush where they grew. He was of opinion that it would be better for them to refer it to

an old Crow, a friend of his, who lived not far off, if they really could not agree to eat berries quietly on the same bush for once in winter-time. But both declared that they wouldn't do it; it would be a mere eating of their words; and they asked him to point out the way to the wise Crow's quarters, whither they sped as fast as they could. The Crow had so much to say, and so many authorities to consult, that the Thrush and his family had the holly-bush well cleared of berries before they returned. The Wren nearly died of cold and hunger; and the Blackbird was so vexed that he did not for a long time sing so sweetly as he had done before.

THE TRAVELLER AND THE SKUNK.

A Skunk in a Civet's nest may lie:

Bad odour will come back by-and-by."

A SKUNK had once wandered from his proper home, and accidentally came upon a Civet's nest, where, being tired out, he lay down to sleep. Weary of change, he was about to return, when he happened to brush close past a simple Traveller, who, with some others, was seeking novel sights, and who smelling something sweet, at once raised a cry that he had struck a fine Civet, and was off after him, calling his fellows to follow and see the prize. It was a long chase, and the Traveller was just about to give it up, when suddenly

he was set upon by all the Skunk's family, who nearly poisoned him and tore him to pieces. His own companions, when they came up, turned from him in disgust, and said the Civet had surely changed its nature since they saw one last.

THE SLUG AND THE FLY.

"When you're advised, you first should ask,
If Nature fits you for the task."

A SLUG and a Fly met one day, and each was surprised to find the other so agreeable.

"Well, Mr. Fly," said the Slug, "we must be more of kindred than we fancied. You fly in the air and I crawl on the ground; but I think you must have crawled once yourself that you understand me so uncommonly well. I never met a more appreciative listener."

"To be sure," said the Fly; "and I still do a little in that line. Seeing the strange things that take place, it isn't too much to say that some day *you* may fly as well as we do, and become one of us."

"I don't expect it," said the Slug; "but when Butterflies come from Caterpillars one needn't lose all hope. I only wish I *could* fly, then I'd take you to flowers you never saw the like of."

"Could you, now?" said the Fly, in real earnest.

"That I would—flowers so rich and fine that you need only to take up your quarters on them, and enjoy life to the full without labour, and be protected like lords and ladies all the time, too."

"That's odd," said the Fly. "All my life I have been wishing for such a flower as that."

So, after discussing it for a time, when the Slug got quite eloquent over the prospect, they agreed to go to the flower and live together there. The Fly was much tried by the Slug's slow pace as they went, for his fancy had been much excited; but at last they reached the wonderful plant. The Slug slowly mounted the long leaf and placed himself at a certain point, and then, as had been agreed, the Fly alighted on his back and he tumbled into the flower, which at once closed over

them both, and held them fast. The Fly was soon suffocated, but the Slug, ere very long, ate his way through the tender leaf, having fed all the daintier that the dead Fly was beside him in the trap. "Ah!" said he, "good advice had sometimes better not be taken. Who'd have fancied that a fellow who could fly so smart couldn't eat his way through a fly-trap leaf."



THE BOY AND THE POSY.

A BOY went out in the moonlight to gather a posy for his little sick sister, who greatly loved the flowers. At first he had contented himself with the lilies and roses which he found at the back of the house, and he had made up a beautiful posy of them, when suddenly he remembered that he had seen some lovely flowers of surpassing bright colours at the border of the wood the day before. So he threw down those he had gathered, and made off to find the others. After a good deal of searching, during which he trod down ever so many hyacinths and wood-anemones, he came on them, and at once plucked what he wanted, and hurried home. Just as he

was going up stairs, he met the doctor, who, looking at the flowers, shook his head, and said,



“ My dear boy, you mustn’t give those to your sister, they will poison the atmosphere, and do

her great harm. She could not breathe beside them for many hours."

"They are so beautiful," said the boy.

"So they are," replied the doctor, "but plain flowers, like plain people, are often the most serviceable in a sick-room. Henbane and poppies are very dangerous; lilies and daisies and wild thyme



—such as would cost you much less trouble to get, would be far better for her, and there are plenty of them in the garden."

"I don't grudge the trouble," said the boy.

"I dare say not," said the doctor, "but the best things are often to be found nearest home."

So the lad went and gathered up the flowers he

had thrown away a little time before ; and never did a bouquet give more pleasure. "I shall take care after this not to go in search of new things, without asking those who know better than I do," said the boy to himself, forming a great resolution.

THE FOX AND THE HUNTERS.

A FOX being run to earth, turned round and addressed his hunters in this wise:—

“Gentlemen, I have done my very best to give you good sport: I have run just fast enough to try the pace of your blood-horses and your hounds, and now I beg you to be reasonable, and to act like the gentlemen you are. Every one knows that it is not me you want, but only my brush; and I appeal to you if it does not demoralise the dogs to let them rush on and mangle and tear me? See, in a moment I will chew my tail off and leave it for you; and if you will but give me a moment’s start, I will never tire sounding your praises for being the gentlemen you should be. Only consider that by doing

this you may have the chance of another day's good sport with me; and a run after a tailless Fox would surely be something new and exciting, and give a far higher interest to the whole thing—sport for sport's sake, you know—since



there would be no brush for those who were in at the death. Then you could cut off a leg, and try how a three-legged Fox would go, and so on, until you really found that I was not worth a rush."

Just as he said this the huntsmen, fancying he showed his teeth, surrounded him, and the dogs closed in; but the Fox's words may yet bear fruit.

BRIMSTONE & WOOD.

"First thoughts are best."



IT'S all very well for you," said Wood; "but I shan't do it, unless you promise me."

"I make no promises," said Brimstone, "it hasn't been the way in our family.



We've done a good deal one way or other to keep

the world alive; an' as for you, you're the slowest coaches going; so, come on."

"Well, I won't," said Wood; "that is, unless—unless you talk more—more respectfully to me," and he broke down in a flood of tears.

"Poor Wood!" said Brimstone to himself; "it's clear you can't do much for yourself in the world, so I'll try and help you. What's the good of quarrelling in that style," he said aloud to poor Wood. "Better try and understand one another, and work to each other's hands like old friends, as we are."

"Well, not so very old either," said Wood; "but we needn't go into that. If you say you're a friend, that's all right, and I'll not refuse to shake hands with you."

Now, it should be known that Wood had had a quarrel with the Crows, a very exacting family, who claimed to have a free-house from him, and had held it for a long period of years. Those Crows were a sort of black gipsies, and their

ill-will often brought very ill-luck. They gave up their free-house in disappointment, and doubt-



less left their curse upon it: the patriarch, or leader of the colony, the last time he descended

from the immemorial tree, turning round and volubly uttering an execration, which any one might have understood as boding no good to those concerned in the transaction. Well, not very long after this, things began to go badly with Wood, and he was forced to put off his old suit, and dress himself in his new clothes, and go to seek a home miles and miles away, where he was introduced to new friends.

Brimstone was his next-door neighbour. There was only a narrow walk between their two houses, which were both under one roof. They often talked to each other; and it had struck Wood that some of Brimstone's family smelt very much of fire; so, when Brimstone proposed that they should go in company for their own profit and the world's benefit, Wood began to grow very shy, and one day Brimstone stepped over, and, after a good deal of talk, said he would pull Wood's nose if Wood didn't do what he wanted, and here Brimstone gravely shook his yellow head. Wood didn't wish to make a noise and disturb the

neighbours; so he asked Brimstone to give him a promise that his rights would be respected. At first, as I have told you, Brimstone rather bounced and bullied at this; but finding it was no good, as Wood only sulked the more, he tried to appear friendly.

Now, there are some people — rather simple usually in their way of looking at things—who can bear a good deal of bounce and bullying, but can't stand out against friendly persuasion; while there are other people in the world who are very good at making pretence of being friendly when they really are anything but that. Brimstone's family had long had a bad character for being scolds, and for making away with their friends when they had served their purpose with them, getting all the credit for clever things, which they could never have done if it hadn't been for the help of other, though less brilliant people. There had been for years a terrible feud between Mr. Brown-Paper and the Brimstones, on this score; but they had been tied together

by legal contract and could not separate till the proper time had expired.

Now it doesn't do for partners openly to speak ill of each other, however much they may feel distrust; the interests, which is but another name for the profits, of each being so mixed up with the good character the other has in the world. Well, when Wood one night took occasion to shake hands with Mr. Brown-Paper, senior, as he was passing along, and to ask him what he thought of the Brimstones, Brown-Paper—a brusque tough-skinned, pimply-faced, old fellow—said:

“ Smart people they are; and shouldn't I know all about 'em? I have known 'em now for a good number of years. My father was a particular friend of Old Simon's, him who founded the business, you know. They're good for any sum, I tell'ee. It's an honour to have dealings with such people as them;” and Mr. Brown-Paper made a very humble bow as he nodded and went away.

Wood now made up his mind that it was all right—people with such a reputation would never injure a genteel fellow like him, when they had done so well by Brown-Paper, who had such a coarse, common-place look. There was a contract drawn up, and Wood soon began business with the Brimstones. It was not long before he found that, though they set the affair a-going, and usually gave the first hint of a good thing, he had to do all the hard labour, and was looked down upon and snubbed in the most humiliating manner. He got a friend to examine his contract, but found that he had no help for it; and when one day he looked in on Brown-Paper, who had now started on his own account in a great dry-goods warehouse, Brown-Paper only looked in his face and laughed.

“Why, don’t you see,” he said, “it was my only chance of getting out of their clutches, and it wasn’t my place to give them a bad character either. So next time you go seeking for a partner, mind your own business, and keep your

eyes open, and don't ask other folk's opinion, and don't come back here with your complaints, if you please."

Poor Wood wished he'd only held by his first thought, and went.

THE WOODMAN'S GIFT.

"All gifts to have do bring their pain,
And men may wish them away again."

ONE morning, as Jack the woodman was going home to breakfast, he stopped suddenly short, at a turning of the path, on seeing, through the mist, a little woman with a red cloak, sitting right before him, as if she were counting something out of a big basket at her side. "I wonder what brings her here at such an hour of the day," said Jack to himself; there be no market hereaway as I know of. However, as I must pass near by her, I may as well see what she's made of. It's one o' them gipsies come back to bother us, I'll be bound."

So Jack went on, and when he came within two steps of her he said, "You're at it pretty

brisk, good dame, considerin' this be not market-day. Pray, what have you in your basket for the buying?" The woman only looked up at Jack with her sharp, clear eyes, and went on steadily putting something from one hand to the other, and counting as she did so; muttering to herself, though Jack could not make out what she said. "You're an odd un to go a-sellin' here in the forest, where a civil answer's set such store by," said he, half aloud. On this she looked up at him, and said, quite slowly and distinctly:—

One—two—three!
Who sells to me,
Makes bargain sure;
For his own good price
I give in a trice,
And he can no more be poor,
Though sad he oft may be—
Oh sad he oft may be.

Jack only heard the first words distinctly, so he said, "Ah, to be sure! And so you're

buying, and not selling; well, that alters the case. I'm not rich enough to part with anything I've got as yet."

But the woman went on in a sort of sing-song—

*For all must share
What they hold most fair,
And let the blood leap free ;
'Tis the one way known
To hold their own
Under the greenwood tree ;
The greenwood tree, the greenwood tree.*

And her voice died away in a quaver. Jack was sure now that she was a gipsy, as she sang what he could not rightly make out; and as he felt sure she had not come there for any good, he said, as boldly as he could, just as she had ceased her humming:—

"Very good for that; but my porridge will be getting cold, so I must be off; but let me have a look in your basket before I go," and this he made to take hold of the basket; but

she quickly caught it in one hand, and passed it by her back to the other side, where it struck upon a stone as she set it down. He was just about to say, with a laugh, how cleverly she had done it for an old woman, when he saw a change come over her face; and, looking to the basket, he noticed something red trickling from it.

"You've hurt my heart," she said to him; "and now I can speak to you. I keep it in that basket; for, I must tell you, that I am under an awful charm, and can only speak plainly to those who hurt my heart. Many are so bold as to seek to look in my basket, I can tell you, but it is few that meet *me*; and that's perhaps as well; for if any eyes, even my own, saw into the basket, my heart would gradually melt away, and even your touching the basket has made it bleed, you see. I count the grey owls' claws to keep me from thinking of it, and I was just doing it when you came up."

"But can't you throw the basket away and

get quit of it," said Jack, anxiously gazing into her face.

"How little *you* know, although you do look a handsome, strapping fellow! Why, what good would that do me? It would be the grief of innocent people, who would be sure to find it, and it wouldn't ease my trouble a bit."

"But couldn't you make a hole and bury it," said Jack, with real sympathy now; for the woman seemed gradually growing younger, and her eyes were so bright they fascinated him.

"Perhaps; if I could bury the owl's claws too; but you see they grow out of my hands and must fix into each other whenever I count one, else it does me no good. I have only one loose, and it's little use to me; so I'll sell that to you, if you like. It's not to everybody I should make such an offer as that; I only buy for most part, and make a good bargain, too, though I give every one the price they ask at first." And on this she opened her hands and showed him the claws. He thought to himself,

It was as well she didn't get angry when he was about to seize the basket.

"But I have nothing to give you for it," said Jack, looking longingly into her dark eyes, and wondering at the change that had come over her.

"I know what you are thinking," said she; "but a merry heart is always young, and you've made mine merry to-day; for though it would be awful for me or anyone to see the heart, it does me good to see a drop of blood from it, and after a little while I feel quite young again."

So Jack, who saw something glimmering very brightly in her hand, said that he would buy the owl's claw from her if she would tell him what he could give her in exchange for it.

"It's not my way to seek more from one I respect than he can give without being much put about; and I saw you had a nice tobacco-stopper in your hand as you came up. I take a smoke sometimes, but different from your way, and what if I give you the claw for that?"

"Done," said Jack; and he put his hand in his pocket for the stopper.

"Oh, but that is iron," she said, looking wistful; "and, whatever I give in exchange for iron becomes gold as I pass it over: perhaps you would not care for gold, so let me think."

"It's no use thinking; gold is exactly what I want," said Jack; "a gold claw! why, I've been wishing ever so long for something to hang at the end of the chain I got with father's old turnip-watch he left me when he died. It's the very thing!"

"Well, I have a good many watches at home myself, and I sometimes give one to a friend who has treated me pleasantly, though he didn't know me at the time. When I come back I may bring you one. They're rather neater than that is, and handy to carry: the odd thing is they never need to be wound."

"The very thing for me," cried Jack; "I 'most always forget to wind mine up on Sundays."

"That's odd," said she; "if there's a day mine don't want winding, it's Sundays!" And now her face reminded Jack of a face he had seen somewhere—he could not remember where—a long time ago.

"But here's the claw," she said, and handed it to him; and he gave her the tobacco-stopper, which he was surprised to see her put into her mouth and swallow it, as it seemed to him.

"That's the best place to keep it," she said, with a smile. "I can easily get it when I want; and you don't know how much good it'll do me!"

"I am afraid I must be off now," said Jack; "Katie will be out of all patience at my being late. We live just down by the stream—there, you can see where the smoke is, though you can't see the house. You might look in some evening as you're passing this way."

"Be sure I will, and gladly," said the woman, nodding and drawing the hood over her head, as she seemed to grow old and wrinkled again;

"and be sure you don't forget me—but there's no fear of that when you have the claw. Good day."

"Certainly not," said Jack; "how could I? Good-bye;" and they both went on their different roads.

People marry young in the forest; and, just two months before this, Jack had got married; and as he came nearer and nearer his home, he felt a kind of shame stealing over him that he should have been so taken with the stranger's look when his honeymoon was not much more than over. But he couldn't get the dark eyes out of his mind, and he was still thinking over all this absently, when he came suddenly up against his wife at a corner, she having gone to look up the road to see if he was coming.

"Thou'rt late," said she.

"Well, and what if I be? I had cause; and, sure, running after me won't keep the porridge warm."

"Thou needn't be so cross," said she; "but wives are but fools to hope for smiles like maidens; but thy porridge is warm for all that;" and Katie, with the tears in her eyes, went out to break wood for herself. Ere long Jack came out and said—

"Katie, it is too bad of thee!" and he took the hatchet from her, said he'd break the wood, kissed her, and then they went into the house. He tried to smoke as was his wont; the want of a stopper, however, kept him from enjoying it so much; but he was determined not to be cross with Katie again, so he gave her a kiss, and went away to the wood to his work.

He had just commenced working when he suddenly recalled what the old woman had said about not forgetting her; and then he looked at the claw, and wished he didn't have it, as somehow it always caught his eyes as he bent down. He began again in a little while, and had just cut off the lower branch of a great

tree, when it seemed as if he saw blood trickling down the side of the bark, and could discern the dim outline of a face there very like what the old woman's was when he first noticed that she was growing younger. He began to think the trees were all watching him, and was compelled to stop every now and then and wipe off the perspiration that gathered on his brow, not from exercise so much as from a strange fear that had taken possession of him. "I can't stand it," he said to himself at last; "the wood is all alive, and looks down on me with scores and scores of eyes for cutting of it down. I only wish I were a gardener now. Pruning trees is quite different from cutting of them down: I have often thought that. I must try and get a job in the garden; I really must, for I see 'tis no good here any longer."

Jack the very next day went to the great house where the owner of the wood dwelt, and begged that he would give him work in his garden. The master, who was a very great man

in the country, was surprised at this request; but, as Jack had been a good servant, he granted it. Jack soon rose to be chief gardener, and not content with that, before many years he became so famous for his knowledge of trees, and bushes, and flowers, their ways and their wants, that people came from all parts to get his opinion; and some said the golden owl's claw was a charm, and he had only to touch any tree or living thing with it to know its secrets, and what was best for it. Be that as it may, his fame even brought honour to his master, who had been wise enough to listen to his first request; and Jack was by-and-by put into a grand post by the king, where his old master would come and see him as a friend, on account of the pride the king took in his knowledge of natural things. But there was one thing vexed Jack sometimes when he let himself think of it, though he kept his mind pretty well occupied, and did not think of it often, and this was that he had no children, though he had often wished

for them. But Katie seemed to feel this most, and was often lonely enough when Jack was at his studies, or away on journeys, as he often was. And though they never ceased to love each other, it must be said that he and Katie never quite understood each other so well after that day he was so cross with her; and she did not like the golden claw because she did not know where it came from, and was fain to have got rid of it if she could; but Jack took care never to let it out of his keeping for a moment. And though he never saw the old woman again, he always spoke of her to himself as having been, after all, his good fairy in disguise, who made him something else than a woodman, and able to think and search and discover things that were useful for others to know. But often, when he was absorbed in his own thoughts, he would be aroused by hearing Katie singing below something like this, and would sometimes have to cease from working for a while—

*It's oh for the sunny stream
That leaps by the daisied lea ;
And it's oh for the cot by the wood,
Where my goodman first brought me.*



*I walk up and down among silk,
And the servants come at my call ;
And my hands are whiter than milk—
But I mourn in midst of it all.*

THE WOODMAN'S GIFT.

*It's oh for the cot by the wood—
The smoke curling up to the west—
The working and waiting, and looking forth
For a face to bring me rest.*

*Kindly looks it has for me still—
It is tender and true as of old ;
But 'tis hard to have no skill,
And a brain that won't take hold.*

*I try and strive till I faint,
And wish I could only lie
Always asleep, and dream that I live
In the happy days gone by.*

*It's oh for the sunny stream
That leaps by the daisied lea ;
And it's oh for the cot by the wood,
Where my goodman first brought me.*

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE GLOW- WORM.

A GLOWWORM fell into great envy of a Nightingale, and resolved to surprise him in the middle of his song. He took an owl into his confidence, hoping thereby to ensure success. Their plan was to hide themselves in the tree where the Nightingale had his nest, and the Glowworm was to throw his full light upon the Nightingale whenever he began to sing, thinking thus to stop him. But it so chanced that it was very bright moonlight, and the Glowworm's ray did not in the least disturb the Nightingale, who, cheered by the brightness of the moon, sang with more than his usual sweetness, thus drawing near to the tree a group who had been

resting in a summer-house not far off. They approached so close to the Glowworm and the Owl



that the two intruders started in fear, and were soon pursued; for the Owl had agreed to carry the

Glowworm on his back, and the light flickering so strangely enabled the pursuers to take the prize easily. The Owl was dazzled by the Glowworm's ray, and could not keep his eyes open, while yet he was afraid to stop for a moment to get rid of his burden. So both of them were taken, and put into the museum of the nearest market-town, where they are still shown on holidays and fair days. The Nightingale never even knew of the plot against him, and, spring after spring, he comes and sings on the same tree as sweetly as at first.

THE SPIDER ON TRIAL.

THERE was once a great gathering of Insects to discuss matters of importance. One more learned than the rest read a paper, in which he laid down the law very strictly as to what constitutes a true Insect.

“That doesn’t apply to me, then,” said the Spider; “I don’t know that I have what you call a thorax and an abdomen, but I *feel* that I’ve got a *head*, notwithstanding that, according to you, it doesn’t put in an appearance as it ought to do. My shape answers my purpose very well, that I’m sure of; and as I look upon it as a simple insult to invite me here to tell me I’m imperfect, even physically speaking, I beg that you’ll look upon me as a stranger hereafter. If

you consider yourselves better than other folk because you can't throw off your limbs when you're in danger and the like, let me tell you that you're rather conceited, for I've more than once felt the advantage of it myself; and so would some of your brothers and sisters when they have come into my neighbourhood in days gone by."

With this the Spider flounced out of the place as well as could be expected of a creature that was distinctly told it had no proper head, and was an imperfect Insect, amid a storm of hisses from the audience, mostly females or neuters, who, the moment the Spider had fairly disappeared, clustered round the learned reader, and nearly suffocated him.

As the Spider was going home he chanced to hear a noise as of a loud debate, and looking in at a door that was ajar, he found that the crabs and lobsters were also holding a meeting by means of representatives. He waited for a little, listening, and then, as he went in, a learned

lobster, in a fine purple suit (probably a judge or a senator, or something of that sort), began eloquently dilating on the characteristics of the crab and lobster tribe. The moment he had finished speaking the Spider came forward, and said he was astonished to find that, in spite of his small size, he was one of them. His body was formed in the very same way, his head, though good, was out of all proportion to his thorax and abdomen, being hardly visible to the naked eye, and he had the marked characteristic of getting rid of his legs and claws very easily. He had been told by the insects, just holding a similar learned meeting to theirs, that, as an insect, he was imperfect; but it deeply gratified him to find that he could well afford to dissociate himself from the insects. What they regarded as defects, only went, as he held, to unite him more strongly to the crabs. As to size, he would only remind them of an old proverb, that "Good stuff was often tied up in little bundles," and beg them to consider the

advisability of forthwith admitting him into their order.

On this the meeting, which had been quite taken by surprise at this unusual and extraordinary appeal, resolved itself into a committee to examine him. He was turned over, touched,



The Spider-Crab.

quizzed, and handled in every possible way, one or two of the more determined investigators having pressed on him very heavily to try if he had a strong shell, whilst others pulled at his legs to see if they would come off, thus sadly paining and maiming him. A small Spider-Crab at length edged slowly forward, with an air of im-

portance, and, after leisurely feeling over the body with one of his legs, declared that, as the creature was quite smooth all over, he was certainly no relative of his, and, without waiting to hear what any one else might say, edged as slowly back to his place. The most learned lobster then came forward, and, with spectacles on nose, looked him over sagely, and said that the matter could not be decided without anatomy, as the internal physiology and structure had more to do with classification than mere outward appearances, which might be deceptive. To this a number of female crabs, and lobsters with a bluish tint, demurred, as they said it would be cruel either to put the creature to death for purposes of dissection, or to vivisect him; it would be better to wait until they found a dead specimen, and let the matter meanwhile lie over; whilst, even as they spoke, they trembled as they looked at the creature writhing there in agonies of pain. He groaned for a little water, but no one offered to bring it

for him, and all at once they fell into discussing his characteristics over again, and by-and-by to re-examining him as minutely as ever, the females and the blue-tinted lobsters being as active as the rest.

"His eyes are not placed as ours are," said a sage crab; "and that itself is enough to preclude him."

"He has no *proper* shell," said another.

"No," said a third; "and this leg, which I've been examining for a while, is not pointed like a crab's leg; under the glass it shows quite differently. Just take a look through the glass, and you'll see," and a considerable time was spent on this point, as the females were very curious on it, and could scarcely be got along with.

"Then I'm much afraid," said the learned lobster, turning from the glass, "that his lungs are not constructed for life in the water, especially in saline water: but that could only be positively determined by anatomical demonstration, and that was the one reason I was desirous

to operate. The cause of science and the purity of our order were alike involved."

"Ah well, he's dead now," cried an elderly female crab that had not spoken before; "perhaps it had been better for him if he had done his duty, and not bothered his head about what class he belonged to."

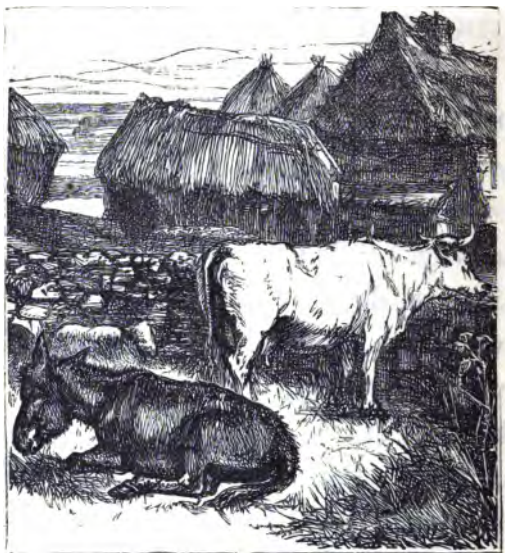
But this only brought frowns from the crowd, male and female alike, and the anatomists immediately set about their work. The internal structure greatly puzzled them for a while, more especially the lungs. The last opinion given was that, under certain circumstances, according to the "law of selection," the Spider *might* have become able to live in the water, and so have proved his right to rank among the crabs; but, now he was dead, it was perhaps on the whole better to let the matter rest till they could enquire if any creature of the same kind had, under the "law of selection," actually been able to live in the water—salt or fresh.

THE DONKEY AND THE MILCH-COW.

A POOR Donkey, whose best days were over, was put by the farmer beside a young Milch-cow, who tossed her head and treated him very scurvily. "You old good-for-nothing," the cow said one day, "what for do you eat so much, when you don't give any milk? You go on chewing constantly, it seems to me, and you do nothing for it!"

"Ah," said the Donkey, "Master knows better than you do. I have served him well for long years, and carried him on my back when he was a child many a day: and, as for the eating, it is more in appearance than reality, for my teeth are pretty well gone nowadays. And the master knows I could let myself out at

the gate if I wished it, and could go where I chose. But I have more sense than to do such a thing nowadays. Whereas, you never get free, but something starts you off, and you drop



your milk, and that is the reason I have got you for good company ; so you needn't boast about making great return for your keep." After this the Cow tried hard to make friends

with the Donkey, to get him to open the gate and let them free, drawing enticing pictures of the juicy clover in the nearest field. But the Donkey at this would only shake his old head, and say, "I don't want to eat more, when, as you say, I don't give any milk: what I have here is fine enough for an 'old good-for-nothing' like me." And now the Cow was sorry that she had been so outspoken at the first.

THE HARES AND THE SQUIRRELS.

"Simple people should beware,
Lest contempt do lead to care."



WALKING through a wood one day, a traveller fell sick, and was compelled to lie down, faint, in the shade of a tree. His good dog was with him; but all the dog could do was to keep station and watch over his master. The horse made off and did not return. Very soon the news was carried far and near, and a number of animals gathered together to take the matter into consideration. When it came to voting who should fill the chair, it was

found that the Hares outnumbered the others, and they naturally put the oldest Hare in the place of honour. After a great deal of talk, which it is not, perhaps, needful to repeat here, it was agreed that, if any other animal could advance nearer to the man than the hares, so as to be able to describe him more clearly than they could, the father-hare should relinquish the chair to him. Most of the other animals demurred to this, the Weasels more especially, declaring that such a thing was no test whatever of real cleverness or bravery. The Hares and the Squirrels, however, carried the day, and it was agreed to put the thing to a fair trial, and at this the Weasels and those who sided with them left in great disgust.

The other animals, however, drew themselves up in a regular line, and at a certain signal each was to do his utmost to get the best and nearest view. The Hares limped up closer and closer, keeping pretty well abreast, cocking their ears; but the Squirrels vanished, as it seemed,

almost in the opposite direction. At this, the Hares smiled to each other, and winked, and nodded, and whispered at the stupidity of the



Squirrels. The moment, however, the Hares' ears appeared on the level with the elevation on which the man lay, the dog took station at the side next to them, so that they could not see

much, and had to retreat a few paces; and as often as they advanced, as often were they in this way driven back. And what was their surprise to see, after they had been compelled to withdraw once or twice, the Squirrels come over the trees behind the screen where the traveller lay, and gradually slip down on it till they were quite close to him. Now the Hares made a dash forward, and, as the dog was divided between watching them and the Squirrels, they crept considerably nearer, but, notwithstanding, they could not get so good a view as the Squirrels. So, after a little time, the animals withdrew to report; and it was agreed that the Squirrel deserved to have the chair, as he was able to tell most precisely what the traveller wore; more especially did he gain respect by calling attention to a little thing with a round, rough handle, which was to be seen on the right-hand side of the traveller's belt. A Crow who, with another bird, had been bold enough to appear at the conference, shook his head sagely at this part

of the description, and said that there might be danger to any one near when the traveller rose, and that they would take good care to be a bit out of the way. And now the Squirrel made the Hares follow him to his quarters, as he



said he could not be comfortable otherwise, even in the chair, and was very much chagrined to find that they could not join him in his nuts with enjoyment, as he sat at the foot of a tree, hospitably inclined. But he took a hearty meal himself, and then said that he would accompany

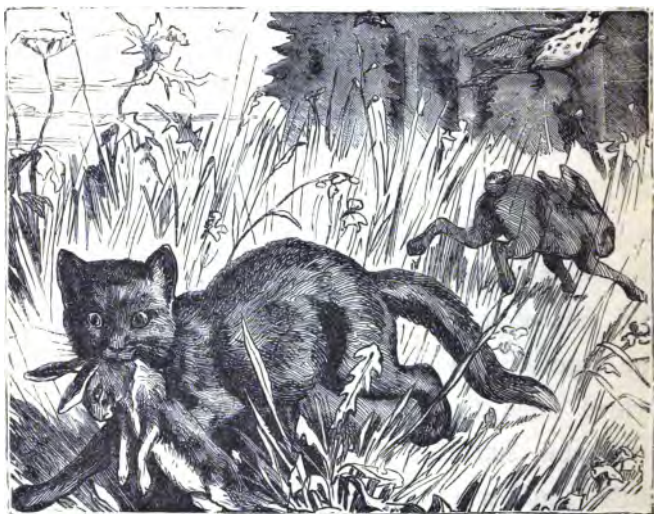
them to their place if they had no objections. They agreed, and off the whole party set. But the Squirrel was so disgusted with the odour and the dirtiness of the place, as he thought, that he could not stay, and had to return as soon as possible, leaving no very good impression on the minds of the Hares as to his politeness.

* * * * *

The Hares, anxious to redeem their character, the next day went back to where the traveller lay, to find the dog worn out with hunger, and not so nimble as before: so they crept nearer and nearer till they were within a few feet of the figure. They then came away with a confirmed idea that dogs were, after all, far less bold and harmful than they had been represented; and when the hares went back to the place the day after, they found both dog and man gone; and they held high festival in the place where dog and man had lain.

The feeling of contempt they now felt for dogs and men in general led them to more

than ordinary boldness in approaching the stead-
ing of the farmer, in whose fields they found
their main support, and they got more and more
reckless, till at length, one day, when they had
even led out their young ones to partake of



the unwonted dainties, they were set upon both by
the dogs and cats from the farm, and several of
their number taken prisoners and carried away.

For a long while they lived in terror—afraid to
stir from among the bracken at the mouth of their

home, every faint rustle or echo reviving their fears, and they have hardly yet recovered. As for the Squirrel, he remains the same pert, observant, nimble little fellow, eating his nuts with enjoyment, and sometimes playing smart tricks on his companions of the woodland; and he may often be heard singing a song like this:—

*I'm a merry little fellow,
And I love the nuts so mellow
On the great forest trees that grow ;
I despise all shams and shifts,
And meagre, shabby thrifts,
Tho' I yearly make my little store, you know.*

*And in the winter chill,
I curl me up so still,
In my nest in the tall beech tree ;
If I waken ere the spring,
I enjoy not anything,
So I just go off to sleep again, you see.*

*Don't you count me very wise,
With my sparkling, pretty eyes,
And my bushy tail, that isn't all for show ;
It's been known to serve for sail,
When, by help of bark and gale,
O'er the water for a change I wished to go.*

THE HARES AND THE SQUIRRELS.

*Oh, how I leap and run,
In the shadow and the sun,
When the summer brings the green upon the trees ;
Oft the children I can see,
When no glimpse they have of me,
And their hearts are dancing lightly as the breeze.*

*For all the wood I know,
And I do not fear to go
To the spots that men do love the best of all ;
I venture, light of heart,
And gaily take my part
In whatever little chances may befall.*

*I'm a merry little fellow,
And I love the nuts so mellow
On the great forest trees that grow :
I despise all shams and shifts,
And meagre, shabby thrifts,
Tho' I yearly make my little store, you know.*



L'ENVOI.

OUT in the world, *ABOUT* among men—

*What wonders present themselves now and again !
What's more to the purpose, men often have found,
They can see themselves better by widening their round ;
And the eyes may get weak if they never look far,
And are apt to mistake a mere cloud for a star.
We must travel, and look, and observe, and make sure
That, after all knowledge, our objects are pure ;
And so our hearts rise, as we brighten our mind—
To pity, to love, and to helping inclin'd :
Thus may we get wiser and find new delights
In little discov'ries, in all kind of sights :
For these will be wasted unless we can bring
A delicate sense that can fix the right thing :
That, by patience and industry, masters the art
Of seizing the whole, without losing the part.
It finds human nature discoursed by the brute—
A world full of wonders within a fly's foot,*

*Hums joyously over the flower with the bee,
And sweeps with the swallow right o'er the wide sea ;
Gathers hints of the law of the right and the wrong
From the dark surly tempest, and from the birds' song.
And so can we travel and still stay at home—
Have the sweet sense of safety as distant we roam ;
Only loving our fellows the more that we know,
While hating all falseness, and coarseness and show.*

*Hand in hand we have thus journeyed on for an hour ;
May it prove to have brought an accession of power
All good things to see, and to love and enjoy—
And few better objects our thoughts could employ.
With this wish repeated for me and for you,
I now throw the pen down and whisper, ADIEU.*

THE END.

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